

Ford touts Tory health-care plan at semi-private health clinic

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PC Leader **Doug Ford** held a campaign event at a health-clinic in London Friday that offers a hybrid of private and public care.

Right on cue, the Liberals blasted Ford for surrounding himself with "advocates of two-tier health care, where there is one system for the rich and one system for the rest of us." The statement pointed to both Ford adviser **Frank Klees** — who once ran for the leadership of the PC party on a two-tiered health-care platform — and the PCs' Kanata—Carleton candidate Dr. **Merrilee Fullerton**, who has said she supports a "hybrid" public-private system.

At the Advanced Medical Group clinic in London, Ford reannounced three planks of his health-care platform, which he believes will take the pressure off the hospital system and bring down wait times: a dental plan for low-income seniors, an investment in mental-health care, and a commitment to build 15,000 long-term care beds in five years.

"I've lost count of all the nurses and doctors who tell me they're worried, worried about the future of our health-care system," Ford said. "And they're frustrated because the politicians at Queen's Park won't listen."

Ford criticized the bureaucracy in the health-care system and said the public funding should go to hiring more doctors and nurses. "With the NDP, things would be even worse, they think the government has all the answers. But let me tell you, more bureaucracy will not deliver better health care."

The clinic where Ford made his announcement is a "hybrid" of public and private care, said executive director **Liz Snelgrove**.

It's one of the growing number of health-care businesses in Ontario that offer both publicly-funded and privately-funded care. The clinic has both OHIP-covered primary and a private surgical centre, as well as other health-care services, such as vision care and audiology, as well as 130 retirement home suites for seniors.

The facility offers medical care that is paid for by OHIP as well as medical care, such as physiotherapy, that isn't, she said.

She explained how that mix works with cataract surgery. The surgeons can bill OHIP for a certain part of the procedure, but the patient will also pay for advanced diagnostics and an upgraded lens.

"You have the choice to go to the OHIP system, and you might have to wait. In southwestern Ontario, the wait times are significant for cataracts," she said. "So this is an option for people; not to jump the cue, but if you want to purchase the upgraded diagnostics and you want an upgraded lens, then this is an option for you."

Snelgrove said Ford held his event at the clinic because he liked it after visiting in March, when he attended a roundtable on the province's labour laws. "He liked the model of care that we offer," she said. "I think they thought this would be a great place to make a health-care announcement."

Asked for comment, the PCs provided this statement from Ford: "I am 100% committed to Ontario's public health care system."