

MPP rejects claims that Health Care reforms will lead to privatization

By Brock Weir

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott is rejecting claims by the Ontario NDP opposition that recently announced changes to the Province's Health Care system will open the door to privatization.

Ms. Elliott, who also serves as both Deputy Premier and Minister of Health & Long Term Care, says the goal of the transformation of Ontario's Health Care system is to centre care around patients and provide connected care.

There has been some suggestion by the Opposition around privatization and I want to ensure everyone in Ontario, and particularly my constituents, that we are not looking at bringing forward privatization as an issue in Ontario. We're looking at strengthening our Public Health Care system.

When asked whether the Government would consider an additional tier of health care, Ms. Elliott's response was an emphatic, absolutely not.

We believe in the fundamental right of all Ontarians to have universal access to a publicly funded system, she says.

The Provincial Government announced sweeping changes to how Health Care is delivered on Tuesday, billed as a way to break down barriers to better patient care.

Once approved by the Legislature, the proposal would do away with the Local Health integration Networks in favour of a larger system that is interconnected and reorganized as one coordinated team, focused on patients and specific local needs.

Patients, said Ms. Elliott at last week's announcement, would experience easy transitions from one health care provider to another, including the transition from hospitals to home health care providers (one patient story, one patient record and one care plan), integrating provincial agencies and specialized provincial programs into a single agency, and improving access to secure digital tools.

One measure [of success] will be a reduction in hallway healthcare and right now we have over 1,000 patients a day in hospitals across the Province that are receiving care in hospital hallways, storage rooms, and so on, says Ms. Elliott. We will see a reduction in that, and we'll also see a reduction in re-admission of patients who have been discharged from hospital because of complications. Right now, what's happening is when people are discharged from hospital, perhaps after surgery, who need home care, by the time they leave the hospital they often don't know who is going to be the homecare provider, when they will be coming and what care they will be receiving. On the other end of things, the provider of home care often doesn't know anything about the patient's history, really, and what services they are going to need.

Sometimes people don't get connected to homecare in a timely manner. Days go by and in the meantime the patient develops complications and ends up back in the hospital. Under the new system, the person will know before they leave the hospital who will be providing the health care. In many cases, they will have met the home care nurse, the nurse will also understand the patient's history, and when the home care is provided, if there are complications, that home care provider will be able to connect back with the hospital in order to be able to deal with the issue and be able to treat the patient in their own home, so they won't have to become hospital patients again.

Here at home, Ms. Elliott says one of the leaders in this form of integrated care is Southlake Regional Health Centre, which has seen a rise in patients who don't necessarily need to be in hospital but haven't been able to find either a spot in long-term care or the supports they need to return home.

They have started a program called Southlake At Home, which the hospital is working with two home care providers to get some of those alternate levels care patients back into their own homes with the home care supports they need, she says. I believe that is going to have a significant impact on reducing Hallway Healthcare in Newmarket-Aurora and Southlake Hospital to make sure that people can get home where they want to be. That's the goal of the entire transformation: to centre care around patients, families and caregivers and make sure people have that connected care they need throughout their healthcare journey.