

Aurora MP pleased with health care deal, will watch success

Last month, the Federal government announced a healthcare investment of \$198.6 billion over 10 years to improve health care delivery across the country and Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy is looking forward to seeing the results.

The new deal, she says, will include measurables on a number of healthcare goals shared by the Federal and Provincial levels of government.

All Canadians know we can't keep doing the same thing with our healthcare system, and I think COVID-19 really underscored that we're just not set up to deal with those challenges, she says, highlighting an aging population as just one such challenge. We really have to change the model and I think the government, in adding this funding, was pretty clear the funding would be given under the Canada Health Transfer, but [in] these bilateral negotiations for additional money, we're really looking for results.

It's important to understand the extent of the healthcare system across the country, she added, and, across Canada, such systems are experiencing shortages of doctors.

We can deliver better services, better results, by working with these teams so it is not all dependent on the family doctor or physician as the gateway to everything else, she continues. The extra money is almost going to be \$74 billion going to Ontario for the next 10 years and of that about \$8.5 million for new bilateral agreement. It is really focused on the four shared health goals that we have. So it really matters that this money goes where we have agreed with the Provinces that it is going to go. We saw in the past, with some healthcare funding that was committed by the Federal government a lot of people in the healthcare field and schools were [asking], What happened to that money? Where did it go?

We can only measure the efficacy of these programs if we have data. That data was a big part of it, agreeing that we're going to have not only electronic medical records but a lot more information on where it is going and the difference it is making because we can't just go and throw good money after bad. However, I will say that the accountability is to the people of Ontario. It's to the people who are using the services. The Provincial Governments are tasked with the delivery of healthcare, we have agreements that say where this money is to go, but at the end of the line it is up to Ontarians to say and for the professional associations, the hospitals, to hold the Ontario government to account because the federal government is still not, if you will, the boss.

Some of the measurables she will be watching for in Ontario is making sure that these improvements lead to better access to family doctors, shorter wait times, and the elimination of hallway healthcare. She also wants to ensure that healthcare workers are properly supported, including nurses and personal support workers.

That being said, she's also keeping an eye on the recent moves by the Province to allow some procedures to take place in private clinics with the use of an OHIP card does not put some residents at a disadvantage.

We can turn to the private sector to private providers to supply these services, the same quality, the same cost, to OHIP and not to the patients because the patients should never have to pay for those services, says MP Taylor Roy. If you have a private entity doing this and they have the pressure of a profit margin or a return on investment for their owners or their shareholders, I find it very hard to see how they can allocate money for that profit or return as well as services and still keep it within what OHIP covers. We will be watching very carefully.

One of our major problems here is the human resource aspect of our healthcare system and I don't understand how private providers will help solve that critical bottleneck that we have of not enough nurses, doctors, and not enough well-paid personal support workers and other workers in the healthcare system that allow them to stay in the system and actually make a decent living. I am skeptical, but healthcare delivery is in the hands of the provinces. We have to respect that, but we are certainly going to be watching carefully and ensuring that the public system isn't hurt by the introduction of more private facilities and that nobody is asked to pay for the service outside of OHIP.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter