

Clement Can't Escape the Facts: For-Profit Care Kills

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Tony Clement is either very confused about the health care system he is supposed to be managing, or deliberately trying to mislead the public. Clement claims that a just-published study showing an increase in death rates in private for-profit versus private not-for-profit hospitals is inapplicable to Ontario. In fact, it is directly applicable.

Clement is taking advantage of the public's confusion about two issues. It is hard to keep straight the difference between the funding of health care, and the delivery of health care. In addition, most Ontario citizens are unaware that our hospitals are not owned and administered by the government, but are private not-for-profit institutions.

In Canada, physician and hospital services are funded by the government. However, the care is delivered by a variety of private providers. These include physicians in private practice, and hospitals. In Ontario, almost all hospitals are owned and administered either by religious institutions, their hospital boards, and the communities they serve.

"When Clement talks about our public hospitals, he is either ignorant, or deliberately confusing funding and delivery," said MRG spokesperson Dr. PJ Devereaux, also the lead author of the study that demonstrated higher death rates in for-profit hospitals. Yes, our hospitals are publicly funded, but they are private not-for-profit in their management and organization." "The findings of this study are clearly applicable to Ontario," said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Gordon Guyatt, who also participated in the research. "The patients who were studied were American Medicare recipients. That means that, like Canadian patients, their health care was funded by the government. Furthermore, if we our hospitals to become for-profit, it would be the same American for-profit hospital chains that produced the increased mortality in the study that would be purchasing our hospitals."

The MRG called on Mr. Clement to get his facts straight, and stop misleading the Canadian public.

"Clement must face the facts," Dr. Guyatt concluded, "these results, which show higher death rates in for-profit hospitals, are directly relevant to the

Ontario scene."