

Cuts at The Ottawa Hospital will improve care, minister says

NDP, Tories attack provincial Liberals' 'wrongheaded' move

By Lee Greenberg, The Ottawa Citizen March 2, 2010 [Comments \(75\)](#)

TORONTO — The quality of care at The Ottawa Hospital will improve with the elimination of as many as 190 jobs, says provincial Health Minister Deb Matthews.

“We absolutely expect that quality of care will improve,” Matthews said Monday, following a weekend story in the Citizen revealing the hospital plans to cut as many as 190 jobs. “If someone is in a hospital, but they can be served in another setting or with the proper supports at home, that’s both better care with a smaller price tag.”

Unions representing hospital workers last week said they had been informed 70 nursing jobs at the hospital would be cut while another 120 job vacancies would remain unfilled.

The issue was raised at Queen’s Park Monday, where both opposition Conservatives and New Democrats criticized the government for its decision to pull back hospital funding.

“This is a wrongheaded direction,” said NDP health critic France Gelin. “It will have an impact on patient care. We lived through this when (former Conservative premier Mike) Harris was in power. We did a major layoff of nurses and we saw the devastating impact, not only on hospitals, but across our healthcare system.”

The Ottawa Hospital faces a \$19-million shortfall in the next fiscal year, based on a best-case funding scenario — a two-per-cent provincial funding increase. Zero and one-per-cent increases are also possible.

“We’ve had a 42-per-cent increase in hospital spending over the past six years,” said Matthews, whose Liberal government faces a \$24.7-billion deficit. “That level of growth is not sustainable. We need to really work hard to bring the spending under control without sacrificing the quality of care for people.”

In a statement posted online, The Ottawa Hospital chief executive Dr. Jack Kitts said he was “confident that through incentives, redeployment and attrition, very few if any nurses at TOH will leave involuntarily.”

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