

Liberals hiding real story on wait times

Recently Health Minister George Smitherman made a big show about improved wait times for medical procedures. However he played fast and loose with the numbers distorting the final picture.

The McGuinty Liberals referred to median wait times, that is, half the people in line are treated earlier than the median time and half are treated later. The government ignores the fact that those people who are still waiting to be treated could be waiting indefinitely.

The government's own agency, the Ontario Health Quality Council, echoed this concern about using median wait times as a benchmark. The agency went on to suggest that a second measurement, that of the 90th percentile wait (the time where 90 per cent of the patients in line had been taken care of) provided a more complete picture.

It has been suggested that the 90th percentile wait time should be no more than double the median wait time. Unfortunately in Ontario this benchmark has not been achieved.

For cancer surgery the median wait time quoted by the government is 23 days so the 90th percentile wait time should be at 46 days but it is actually at 76 days, fully 30 days beyond the suggested benchmark.

For angiography the median wait time is 14 days so the 90th percentile wait time should be 28 days but it is really 39 days, or 11 days beyond the benchmark. For angioplasty the median wait time was five days benchmarking the 90th percentile wait time at 10 days where it is really at 26 days or 16 days beyond the benchmark.

Bypass surgery had a median wait of 14 days, suggesting a 90th percentile wait time of 28 days, while for Ontario patients it was really 45 days, fully 17 days longer than it should be. Cataract surgery patients waited a median of 78 days, putting the 90th percentile expectation at

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156 days. However the fact is the 90th percentile patient was treated after 297 days, which is 141 days later than the benchmark suggests.

Hip replacements were completed on half the patients in 96 days, putting the 90th percentile benchmark at 192 days. Ontarians waited 331 days before the 90th percentile was reached, 139 days later. Knee replacements took a median of 122 days, putting the benchmark expectation for the 90th percentile patient at 244 days but in Ontario the reality was that 90th percentile patient was finally treated after 422 days or, 178 days later than expected.

MRI scans were completed on the first half of those waiting in 32 days, setting the 90th percentile expectation at 64 days fully 41 days before the 90th percentile was reached in Mr. McGuinty's Ontario. CT scans were done in 14 days for the median patient, indicating a 28-day wait for the 90th percentile patient but it was 74 days before the 90th percentile was reached in reality, 46 days later.

We now have benchmarks we can use to compare future numbers. I know I'll be looking closely at that 90th percentile figure to help ascertain any claims of success on wait time improvements.

—Ted Chudleigh is the MPP for Halton



IT Networking Group Breakfast
Tuesday June 20, 2006
North Halton Golf & Country Club
 363 Maple Ave., Georgetown
7:30 am - 9:30 am

Join us for a business breakfast geared for people working in the **Information Technology Industry** where you will make connections for the future. Meet other **local IT business people**, discuss business opportunities, learn about local resources in Halton Hills and exchange ideas and information in an informal setting.

Wendy Hue from Partners in Progress will be discussing how to network and receive referrals. Topics include how to make sales, seek out new customers, contracts, etc.

Each person has the opportunity to stand up and introduce herself and give a 30-second networking statement or infomercial. **Reservations are necessary.** Tables will be available for brochures and/or business cards.

COST:
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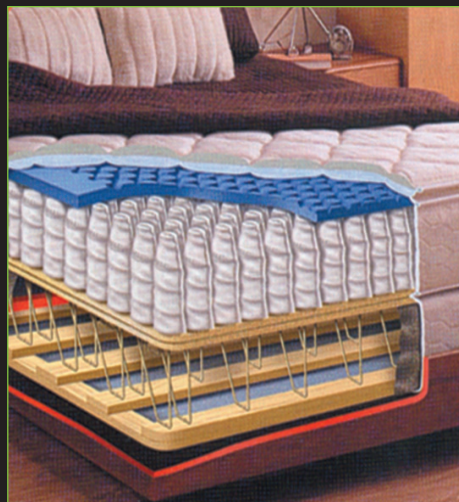
BY RESERVATION ONLY PLEASE by Monday, June 19, 2006
Registrations must be pre-paid
Cancellations and/or refunds will not be processed after 12:00 noon on Monday, June 19, 2006

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce
 328 Guelph St., Georgetown
 905-877-7119 Fax 905-877-5117
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