

HEALTHCARE:

THE HAWKESBURY SOLUTION

In January 1984, Sheila Copps (*Liberal* health critic and Hamilton Centre MPP) told a public audience that the Ontario system of health care is in danger of being subverted by 'creeping privatization'. The focus of her ire on that occasion was the Hawkesbury hospital board which saw fit to hire a California company called *American Medical International* to run the facility.

In Copp's view, such moves threaten the 'system' by encouraging an unhealthy emphasis on the 'bottom line' of health care. She fears that cost-cutting measures would reduce both salaries and the quality of care: 'If we let the private sector take over we're in trouble, because their bottom line is *profit*.'

What actually happened at *Hawkesbury*?

When John McLaughlin, the Canadian-born *A.M.I.* administrator took over about a year ago, he found an out-dated management system, overdue financial statements, and poor equipment. By tying the small *Hawkesbury* hospital into *A.M.I.*'s chain of 130 hospitals operating in 13 countries, he provided access to the following: a centralized financial system supplying computerized information services, the advice of top-flight specialists on subjects ranging from diet to accounting, and bulk purchasing of supplies and equipment.

McLaughlin also cut back on overtime and part-time staff, gave department heads responsibility for their budgets and taught them how to *manage* their budgets. Here are the results of his methods:

- elimination of the hospital's \$350,000 deficit,
- improvement in staff morale,
- improvement in the quality of patient care,
- production (just as Copps had feared!) of a \$369,000 *profit*.

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The hospital is now scheduled to move into a new, \$16 million, 110-bed facility. The board is happy. The patients are happy. The staff is happy. The public is happy. *A.M.I.* is happy. Sheila Copps is *not* happy.

The **Freedom Party** of Ontario supports and welcomes all free-market initiatives of this kind as providing a beginning for more common-sense solutions to the continuing problems of inefficient hospital operation and escalating costs of hospital care.

Freedom Party believes that the *purpose of government* is to *protect* your freedom of choice, *not* to restrict it.

If you believe that hospitals should be free to make their own decisions and selections concerning hospital administration, then support **Freedom Party**. After all, freedom of choice is what we're all about!

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