

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
October 8, 2009

Auditor General Says No Value in One Billion Spent Dollars

If you hadn't heard of eHealth before, you probably have by now. eHealth Ontario was set up by the Liberal government in the fall of 2008 to finally bring Ontario's medical records into the electronic age. It would allow health care professionals to share medical files and cut down delays and transfer errors for patients.

This week, Auditor General Jim McCarter released his much anticipated report which would determine if Ontarians received value for the money spent to set up eHealth.

As it turns out Ontario families have not received value for their money.

One billion dollars has been spent by the Liberal government on a health system that still isn't operational.

The Smart Systems for Health Agency was set up to create electronic health records for Ontarians, but was dissolved last fall after a review of the agency highlighted poor investments and lack of direction from 2003 to 2008. Shortly after, eHealth Ontario was created. But, as Ontarians foot the bill; electronic health records still do not exist.

Since the McGuinty Liberals began working on electronic health record initiatives, one billion taxpayer dollars have gone to lining the pockets of consultants instead of implementing electronic health records for Ontario.

Taxpayers have been footing the bill for transportation costs, luxury apartments, food bills, and a \$3,000 per day contract fees for independent consultants. Two executives lived in Alberta and charged the taxpayers for regular trips to Ontario; one billed for flights 33 times in five months to be exact. Another consultant was paid \$300 an hour to read newspapers, watch television, and have conversations on the subway! None of these contracts were tendered, which is necessary under current government rules. Rules that were set up specifically to protect taxpayer's money and ensure that favoritism is not practiced.

The Auditor General said in his report, "the sole-sourcing of a number of significant consultant contracts at the eHealth Ontario agency is an indication of financial governance problems." The Auditor estimates that two-thirds of all eHealth contracts were untendered. He has also said, "Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding some of these contracts are also true." Liberal friendly firms were obvious beneficiaries of untendered contracts from eHealth Ontario.

The Auditor also highlighted that Premier McGuinty should also be held to account. The appointments of the Chair and CEO of eHealth Ontario were his choice. It was these

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individuals who gave contracts to their Liberal friends and spent a billion dollars without achieving any results.

All of this would not have come to light if it had not been for the Progressive Conservative Party submitting Freedom of Information requests to the Liberal government. The Freedom of Information process has proven to show value to the PC Opposition as we demand accountability and transparency from the McGuinty Liberals. Ultimately as taxpayers, you deserve to know where your money is being spent.

After months of calls for the resignation of the Minister, and repeated calls this week from PC Health Critic Christine Elliott; the Minister of Health and Long Term Care resigned his post as cabinet minister this week.

The taxpayers of Ontario deserve accountability from their government. How are Ontarians supposed to have faith in their government when Premier McGuinty himself is personally responsible for appointing the Chair and CEO of eHealth Ontario?

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