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Liberal perpetuated myths regarding Conservatives and health care

The Ontario Liberals have quietly pushed their tall tales, telling anyone who will listen that the PC government under Mike Harris gutted Ontario's health care system.

Their tales go beyond spin and enter the realm of self-serving lie. It is most telling that the Liberals never bring this lie into public debate, they merely use it as part of a whisper campaign, repeating it so often in their own circles that it begins to take hold among the general populace.

For example, references to hospital closures that I've found suggest that in total the Liberals claim that the PC government closed 39 hospitals in Ontario. They arrive at this number in two ways. Several places in Ontario including Thunder Bay, Cobourg, Peterborough and Sault Ste. Marie among others had two aging hospital facilities. The PCs closed these old, outdated hospitals and built new ones.

The Liberals have lied by omission, in failing to account for the new hospitals that were built in Ontario, some to replace aging buildings and several entirely new hospitals to serve growing populations. By my count we closed 12 hospitals in this manner and opened 17 new ones.

In addition, several hospitals located in close proximity were amalgamated to save on administrative costs. For example Oakville Trafalgar, Milton District and Georgetown hospitals were amalgamated into Halton Healthcare Services. Liberal Party math says we closed three hospitals. The truth is we simply streamlined the costs – the facilities never closed.

We repeated this in most major urban centers across Ontario.

The truth is we streamlined costs, opened new facilities to replace aging or inefficient buildings and significantly grew health care facilities and

increased services in Ontario during our years in government.

We started the Oakville hospital project in 2001, with the new facilities slated to open in Oakville in 2009. Milton was supposed to follow. The Liberals shut down the Oakville project only to restart it in 2005 with an anticipated opening of 2014. Milton's project only barely registers on their radar.

The Liberals conveniently forget the PC government opened facilities across the province to house 20,000 new long term care patients, people who were taking needed spaces in acute care hospitals. In addition we upgraded existing long term care facilities that house 16,000 Ontarians. We did this because both the previous Liberal and NDP governments had ignored this whole sector of health services.

These new long term care facilities are not hospitals, but they have taken a significant part of the pre-Harris era function of hospitals and increased the capacity of existing hospital facilities by taking on the most difficult chronic cases.

And this isn't only about hospitals. Remember, the Liberals say the Harris PCs gutted health care. So how do they explain that the PCs created 12,000 new nursing positions after a painful reorganization of nursing services? Currently the Liberals have delayed hiring their promised 9,000 new nurses due to budget problems, problems we warned them about years before they occurred. How do they explain our creation of community and home care services? How do they explain substantially increased funding for cardiac and cancer care under the PCs and expanded cancer care centres in Windsor, Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Kingston, London and Sudbury? How do they explain 52 new MRIs the PCs brought to Ontario where only 12 existed before and the addition of 55 CT scanners?

At what point does partisan political spin damage our society? At what point do lies like this get punished by voters?