



The **R**ecord.com

[\[Close\]](#)

## Medical ad is a warning

### EDITORIAL

Passengers on Grand River Transit buses might be surprised when they see ads for a private American company that offers to help Canadian patients obtain medical services. With our publicly based system, we're not used to seeing private companies advertising health care services. The ads are sponsored by MediBid, a company in Delaware with offices in the United States and Toronto.

MediBid appears to be a broker, a company that puts patients who need medical services in contact with doctors in the United States who are willing to provide those services. It regards itself as the "marketplace for medicine," which is not a phrase usually used in Canada.

The company has chosen to focus on knee replacements in Ontario because it thinks waiting lists for orthopedic surgery are too long.

This is a complex subject because, on the one hand, Canadians like to support the public system, but on the other hand they also want to receive medical treatment as quickly as possible — sometimes more quickly than the public system can provide.

Ironically, the waiting times for knee-replacement surgery are better than they were. Andrew Morrison, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, said the average wait for knee-replacement surgery was 321 days in 2007 when Ontario started focusing on waiting times. The average now is 176 days.

Whether a 176-day wait is reasonable is a hard question to answer. Different patients may give different answers.

Lacey Clifton, MediBid's marketing and communications director, acknowledged that the company's services are not suitable for everyone but she added that the company is trying to give patients options.

MediBid's interest in Ontario comes at an interesting time. No one would deny that the current medical and hospital system is under financial strain.

Premier Dalton McGuinty has already issued a blunt warning about the future of health care. Speaking in March, he noted that the Ontario government now spends about 46 per cent of its budget on health care, and that the percentage has grown significantly in recent years. Two decades ago, it consumed only 32 per cent. The premier also said government officials have told him health care will consume 70 per cent of the budget in 12 years' time unless Ontarians make major changes.

That is a staggering figure, and probably one that MediBid is aware of. The company may suspect that Ontario's doctors and hospitals will have even more trouble in future meeting the demand for medical care than at present.

The lesson from MediBid's interest in Ontario is clear: Companies from outside Ontario will offer to help Ontarians obtain medical treatment if the government is not able to do so.

The **R**ecord.com



© Copyright 2007 Metroland Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved. The reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from www.thespec.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

