

Profit is **not** the cure

Canada's health care system is under threat. First, from private investors, many based in the United States, who are clamouring to cash in on Canadian health care. Second, by for-profit providers and insurers within Canada who are trying to dismantle public health care for their own personal gain. And third, from provincial governments actively undermining the Canada Health Act by courting the private sector into taking a greater role in health care funding and delivery.

Instead of renewing its support for public health care, the federal Conservative government is letting the forces of privatization dismantle our most treasured social program. Unless ordinary Canadians from every part of the country rise up to defend it, our public health care system will not survive this onslaught from the for-profit sector.

It's time to stand up for public health care and let our government know that profit is not the cure!

Profit is more expensive

The U.S. government spends nearly twice as much per person on health care as we do and still more than 40 million people have no health care whatsoever. The system is so broken that the U.S. government, led by President Barack Obama, is now looking at a single-payer (government funded) health care model, using Canada's universal single-payer system, which covers everyone for much less money, as an example.

Health cost data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information shows that our public health system costs less than \$180 per month per Canadian. You would have to pay a private insurer three times that in the U.S. to get comparable service.

Profit discriminates

Promoters of for-profit health care say it should be okay for people to pay thousands of dollars at a private clinic if they need a hip replacement, knee surgery, or other treatment. But what about the people who can't afford to pay? What about seniors, single parents, or those dealing with chronic disease?

Letting the rich pay to get faster health care in the private sector contravenes the principles of the Canada Health Act by threatening the equality of access to medical services. All Canadians should have the same access to quality health care.



Profit won't reduce wait times

For-profit "solutions" will not reduce wait times. Yet they are continually proposed in British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta, with Prime Minister Stephen Harper supporting Quebec's plan to use private for-profit clinics.

Allowing provinces to fund surgeries in private for-profit clinics will take much-needed money away from public hospitals and give it to private providers. Studies have shown that adding for-profit health care services actually lengthens waiting times in the public system because doctors opt to perform services in the private sector where they are paid more.



Profit puts lives at risk

“With for-profit care, you end up paying with your money, and your life,” concluded Dr. P.J. Devereaux in a comparative study of death rates in the Canadian and U.S. health care systems. The study, which was published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, suggests that if we switch to for-profit hospitals, over 2,000 more Canadians will die needlessly each year.

The culprit is profit. When private health providers have to pay huge salaries to senior administrators and keep investors happy, they cut costs by hiring less qualified doctors and fewer nurses. The consequences are lethal.

Profit leads to Americanization

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is very clear – the exemption for health care, which has kept large U.S. health corporations out of Canada, applies only to a fully public system.

Once we privatize even some health care services, NAFTA will force Canada to give equal treatment to U.S. companies competing against our public system. That means the argument that Canada could copy models in Sweden, France or Switzerland is a complete fallacy because unlike Canada, these European countries aren't tied to the U.S. by a free trade agreement.

Say no to profit!

You can help us stand up for public health care by demanding that the federal government work with the provinces to stop the expansion and reduce the role of for-profit health care in Canada's health care system. Contact your MP today and tell them you support public health care. Ask your MP to uphold the Canada Health Act and say “no” to for-profit operators.

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For more information about the Council of Canadians' campaign in support of public health care, visit our website at www.canadians.org, or call us toll free at 1-800-387-7177.