

# Don't Gamble



# With Canada

## Don't gamble with public health care!

Canada's health care system is a \$90-billion-a-year gold mine waiting to be exploited.

That's the view of the influential U.S. Coalition of Service Industries, a powerful lobby group that's pushing the U.S. government to ensure the **General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)** inside the World Trade Organization (WTO) allows American ownership of foreign (i.e., Canadian) health care facilities.

And the U.S. government is only too eager to deliver on what their corporations want. Recently U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky said she plans to negotiate a radical rewriting of how the GATS works by ensuring that health care is automatically included in the deal. If that happens, then a U.S. for-profit hospital setting up shop in Canada would "immediately and unconditionally" receive the same treatment from governments as existing non-profit facilities.

Since the U.S. has all but abandoned universal health care, we should be worried about the threat to Medicare. Here's what the president of the world's largest for-profit hospital corporation had to say: "Health care is a business no different than the airline or ball-bearing industry." And he vowed to "destroy" every public hospital in North America as they are not "good corporate citizens."

Even the European Union wants in on the act. A senior EU official has said that no services should be excluded from the GATS talks and that health care is "ripe for liberalization."

Shouldn't we take comfort from the fact that Canada has traditionally been committed to universal health care? On the contrary, the Canadian government published its WTO position paper in late 1999, declaring that in the area of services nothing was off the table, including the "politically sensitive" area of health care.

Alberta's looming two-tier health care system (Bill 11) casts a further shadow over the preservation of

Medicare. Under the current GATS exemption, a sector must be completely financed by government and have no commercial purpose. There are few areas in Canada's health system that are commercial-free any more. But clearly, if Alberta allows for-profit corporations to compete with existing hospitals for public funding to provide health care "services," U.S. and other for-profit foreign corporations could use the current GATS agreement to force their way not just into Alberta, but any province in Canada.

So we have a double-barreled threat to Medicare: one homegrown—Alberta's Bill 11—and one international—the GATS.

Send a message to Ottawa:  
Don't gamble with public health care.  
Tell the federal government to  
Get out of the GATS!

Call, write or fax your Member of Parliament and Minister for International Trade Pierre Pettigrew.

Ask them to withdraw from the GATS negotiations—*now*.

(To get your MP's name and phone number, call 1 800 267-7360.)

Write to: Pierre Pettigrew

Minister for International Trade  
507 Confederation Building  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
Tel.: (613) 995-8872  
Fax.: (613) 995-9926  
Email: PettiP@parl.gc.ca



Join The Council of Canadians' campaign to stop the GATS.

For more information call 1 800 387-7177  
Or visit our Web site at [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org)

