

Strong medicine: ending Ontario's health care crisis

One in a series of election fact sheets from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union

After eight years of Tory government, it will take strong medicine to save our health care system.

Health care workers go the extra mile every day just to keep the system from total collapse, but they're tired of band-aid solutions. It's time to rebuild public health care in Ontario. Here's how the next government can do it:

1. Invest in people

Skilled, experienced personnel are leaving our public health care system; too few new workers are being recruited. Serious staff shortages are the result. We need to invest in the human resources that make our health care system work. Health care must once again become an attractive place to work, for all members of the health care team.

2. Stop P3 hospitals

Private-public partnerships (P3s), also known as privatization, are an expensive shell game. P3s in Britain have left a legacy of corruption, mismanagement, and – according to studies – increased death rates. P3s mean the public takes the risks while companies take the profits. We must stop all P3 hospital schemes.

3. Pull the plug on private MRI and CT

Private MRI and CT diagnostic clinics will **not** reduce waiting lists. They **will** benefit the health-care companies who fund Tory campaigns. Private clinics are already poaching trained staff from our public hospitals. With private clinics, the rich go to the front of the line while everyone else waits longer. MRI and CT scans should be provided at public hospitals, not private clinics.

4. Create a public home care system

Under Ontario's privatized home care system, cut-throat competition for contracts means the lowest bidder is caring for our loved ones.

Competitive bidding drives down wages, and drives many home care workers to find work elsewhere.

Competitive bidding is killing home care. We need a not-for-profit **public** system.

5. Invest in public health

The Walkerton tragedy and the SARS crisis showed what happens when governments fail to invest in public health. Our health system needs the capacity to deal with crises, and to prevent them before they happen. The Tories fired key public health scientists that could have helped us cope with present and future public health risks. We need major investments in public health now, before the next crisis hits.

6. Provide more full-time health care jobs

Many health care workers are forced to hold jobs at several institutions just to make ends meet. This is bad for family life; it's also bad for public health. We need full-time, permanent jobs in health care for those who want them, not casual labour.

7. Invest in mental health

A piecemeal approach to mental health services does not work. Too many institutions are closing, merging or being privatized. Our most vulnerable citizens are falling through the ever-widening gaps in the system. We must increase funding – and keep mental health care **public**.

8. Stop messing with the system

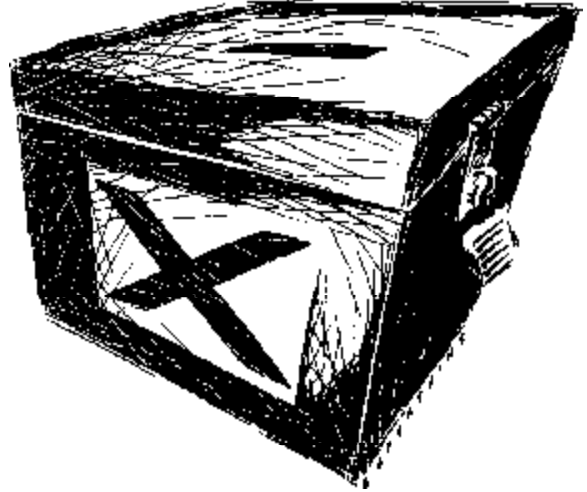
Downloading, amalgamation, and privatization have not fixed health care. While the \$100,000 salary club has exploded under new regional health care "empires," front-line staff shortages continue to worsen. Government must stop tampering and let front-line health care workers do their jobs.

**It's all about
Public
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We've got to save our health care system. The ballot box is the place to do it.

Here's how you can help rescue health care in Ontario:

1. Vote. Voter turnout in the last Ontario election was just 58.3 per cent of those eligible. Low turnouts mean voting has never been more important – and your vote has never been worth more.
2. Work to defeat your local Tory. If Conservatives were going to fix our health care system, they would have done it by now.
3. Help a health-friendly candidate. Call the candidate's campaign office. Offer to take a lawn or window sign. Wear a button. Volunteer to go door-to-door to talk to your neighbours. Sign up for a phone bank. Help out in the campaign office.



4. Urge all your co-workers to help oust this government – and start rebuilding health care in Ontario.

Talk to your candidates

You've got a right to ask questions of the people who want to represent you. On your doorstep, on the street, and at all-candidates meetings, ask candidates what they will do to strengthen our health care system. Will they:

- Invest more money in public hospitals?
- Fight to keep diagnostic services like MRI and CT in the public system?
- Stop the proliferation of P3 hospitals?
- Invest in public health?
- Keep public health care public?
- End competitive bidding and create a public home care system?

Take Action Now

The future of health care in Ontario for years to come will be decided on Election Day. Play a part in this election. Together, we can make things better.

To find out how to get involved in the OPSEU campaign, check our web site at www.opseu.org.

