

LHINs AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF HEALTH CARE

KEY ISSUES

By 2007, the Liberals had announced 12 private “P3” hospitals—six times more than the Harris Conservatives—that will privatize jobs and services in local communities. Many more are expected. Already many of these projects have cost overruns, and hundreds of millions of taxpayers’ dollars are going into the pockets of private shareholders instead of health care services.

The Liberal government has also introduced Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), which will oversee two-thirds of Ontario’s health care budget and determine the health care priorities and services in every community. LHINs will weaken Medicare by opening the door to increased private health care delivery through competitive bidding. Private clinics and services will win contracts for providing health services that were once delivered publicly. The result will mean market-based health care, privatization and the removal of services from local communities.

In the 1990s, the Conservative government removed set standards of staffing and care for residents of long-term facilities. By 2000, the average hours of care per day for residents dropped to 2.04 hours. The McGuinty Liberals broke an election promise to reintroduce set standards when it introduced Bill 140. CUPE Ontario and its partners have campaigned for 3.5 hours of care per day, a standard that other provinces are striving to achieve. The new legislation for long-term care homes also needs measures to protect front line workers from violence, and ensure accountability of public money in all homes.

THE PARTIES REPORT CARD

Conservatives

- Have explicitly proposed for-profit surgical clinics be introduced into the health care system. This radical proposal takes privatization much further than the Harris government dared.
- Have promised to tax less and spend more. Their math doesn’t add up.

Liberals

- Broke their promise to stop private P3 hospitals; have set up LHINs, which will threaten services in smaller communities and open the door to market-based health care.
- Made a promise to put minimum staffing standards into regulations for long-term care facilities. Have yet to fulfil this promise despite province-wide pressure by CUPE Ontario and partners.

NDP

- Committed to publicly funded and delivered health care and an end to private hospitals.
- Would put all health care funding into public services, not profits of private corporations.
- Support a legislated minimum standard for all patients in long-term care, and adequate funding to ensure that it happens.
- Will scrap competitive bidding in home care.

CUPE ONTARIO’S POSITION ...

Our choice: Only the NDP supports publicly funded and delivered health care, and standards of care for our seniors and loved ones in long-term care facilities.