

For-Profit Health Care

Public health care has existed in Canada for 50 years. It guarantees access to doctor and hospital services regardless of people's ability to pay. In recent years, privatization has been creeping into our health care system. This has led to illegal billing practices, lower-quality care, unnecessary medical tests, and pressure on patients to buy medical services.

88 private clinics across Canada have been illegally billing patients.

– Ontario Health Coalition, 2017

\$ For-profit clinics across the country are illegally billing patients or misleading them into thinking they have to pay for publicly-covered services.

\$ Boutique medical clinics are common in major urban settings in Canada. They often order unnecessary medical tests that can do more harm than good.

\$ For-profit diagnostic imaging centres are operating in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Although they provide fewer images than publicly-run MRIs, governments are promoting them as “innovations” in health care delivery.

\$ A for-profit plasma company has opened collection centres near vulnerable communities in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. It pays people for their blood plasma and then sells it on the international market. The company plans to open many more centres.

\$ A doctor in British Columbia has filed a lawsuit claiming that doctors should be allowed to charge patients and the public system for the same procedures. He says there shouldn't be a cap on private fees for health care, and that doctors should be able to charge whatever the market will bear.

\$ For years, patients in Quebec were charged for things like eye drops (up to \$300), inserting IUDs (up to \$200), and instruments and medication for colonoscopies (\$500).

The Federal Government's Role and Responsibility

The federal government is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the *Canada Health Act*. All provinces and territories must provide medically necessary health services that are: publicly-administered, universal, comprehensive, accessible and portable. Provinces and territories must also prevent user fees and extra-billing. If the provinces don't follow these principles, the federal government can withhold funding for health care.