

Community Dispatch

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Canada Votes! – Health Care

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VOTES!

“Just one question...”

This publication is intended to help you engage with local candidates in the federal election on October 14, 2008. It's all about social issues that impact your community; questions that matter to you; and the role that the federal government can choose to take in addressing them.

Questions raise issues. Questions require candidates to develop a clear position on where they stand. In this document, we cover thirteen social issues affecting communities nationwide today, provide sample questions you can ask your candidates, and include links to more information. By getting involved, you help shape the kind of community in which you live – all it takes is just **one question**.

Health Care

Canada's Public Health Care System, established in 1966, is meant to provide universal access to medical care for all Canadians. In 1999, the federal and provincial governments reaffirmed in the Social Union Framework Agreement that they are committed to health care that has “comprehensiveness, universality, portability, public administration and accessibility.” Over the years, changes and neglect have forced

our health care system into a state of distress. The federal government can choose to reinvest and reinvigorate our failing health care system with a human resource strategy to address the shortage of health care professionals, instead of turning to privatization.

The federal government funds health care in each province, provided that the provinces adhere to the principles of the Canada Health Act, which are to operate under a public nonprofit administration and to provide equal and accessible health care to all Canadians, everywhere in Canada. However, in direct contrast to the Canada Health Act, we are starting to see more private clinics and user-paid health care. User-paid health care is not accessible to all, and it changes the administration rules. Health facilities then begin to compete on an unlevelled playing field. Introducing more privatization into a public system could jeopardize an already critical situation where health facilities have a difficult time finding and keeping health care professionals. Complete privatization of the public system would divide our society into those who can afford to pay for health care, and those who can't – essentially turning health care into a privilege instead of a right.

Some people are calling for health care privatization because they are fed up with long waiting lists, due in part to the shortage of doctors. In 2007, four million Canadians did not have a family doctor. The shortage of health care professionals is particularly worrisome with our growing aging population. However, the problems we face in the current public system can be resolved without turning to privatization.

The federal government can choose to create a long-term strategy that includes increasing available training spaces for doctors and nurses, and a system for recognizing credentials for foreign trained health professionals. We can choose a government that will fight to protect, and improve our universal public health system that respects the rights of all Canadians to access the care they need.

For More Information:

Canadian Health Coalition
www.healthcoalition.ca/

Canadian Institute for Health Information
www.cihi.ca/cihiweb/dispPage.jsp?cw_page=AR_43_E

Sources

Government of Canada, Social Union, News Release. 1999 Feb. 4. *A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians: An Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Governments of the Provinces and Territories.* http://www.socialunion.gc.ca/news/020499_e.html (8 Sept. 2008).

Statistics Canada. 2007. *Canadian Community Health Survey 2007.* <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/080618/d080618a.htm> (11 Sept. 2008).

Health Care: Key Points & Questions

Privatization of the health care system is increasing in some provinces.

Canada has a significant shortage of health care professionals like doctors and nurses.

What will your party do to protect our public health care system?

Where does your party stand on private health care?

Canada Votes Papers 2008 is a pan-Canadian collaboration between [SPARC BC](#), [Community Social Planning Council of Toronto](#), [Community Development Halton](#), [Human Development Council St. John](#), and [Canadian Council on Social Development](#). Social planning organizations across the country are helping to strengthen communities and work on social justice issues. We also recognize the need to work together around key issues affecting our communities. We have come together to provide this publication on the federal election because we believe that democracy works best when citizens engage in dialogue on important issues.

Canada Votes papers outline key social issues and related questions that are important in this election. Asking questions is a way to make sure these issues are on the public agenda. By reading this publication and passing it on, by asking questions and talking about the issues, and especially by voting on October 14, 2008, you can help shape the kind of community in which you want to live.

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