

## 9. Health Care

Full health care should encourage the prevention of illness. Important determinants of good health are a safe and secure job, a decent income, good housing, quality education, and a healthy environment. We need a full employment strategy and a strong social safety net. If we ignore these, we risk creating more illness and suffering, with resulting higher health care costs.

Important components of a health care system are long-term care, home care, pharmacare, and dental care programs. Medicare has saved us billions of dollars and improved our health. Expanding it into other vital areas will not only improve health, it will also make the system more efficient. All parts of the health care system must be comprehensive, universal, accessible, portable, publicly-run, and non-profit.

The five principles of the *Canada Health Act* secure a decent health care system for us all. We must not let them be eroded. These principles are:

- **Public Administration.**
  - The administration of the health care insurance plan of a province or territory must be carried out on a non-profit basis by a public authority.
- **Comprehensiveness.**
  - All medically necessary services provided by hospitals and doctors must be insured.
- **Universality.**
  - All insured persons in the province or territory must be entitled to public health insurance coverage on uniform terms and conditions.
- **Portability.**
  - Coverage for insured services must be maintained when an insured person moves or travels within Canada or travels outside the country.
- **Accessibility.**
  - Reasonable access by insured persons to medically necessary hospital and physician services must be unimpeded by financial or other barriers.

**Recommendations for A People's Charter:**

- **Hospitals and long-term care.**
  - *Encourage a stronger role for community hospitals, with greater emphasis on outreach and satellite facilities, and reverse all hospital and bed closures.*
  - *Restore full funding for chronic care beds and facilities, and stop awarding of long-term care beds to private, for-profit companies.*
  - *Stop all for-profit hospital projects, including public-private partnerships. Bring rehabilitation, laboratories, housekeeping, dietary, laundry, and administrative and other services back to the public sector. The sell-off of our public system must immediately stop. Cancer treatment should never be provided for profit. The private cancer clinic at Sunnybrook Hospital should be taken back from private hands.*
  - *Increase staff levels in hospitals, acute care, long term and chronic care, and psychiatric facilities. Staffing levels must always ensure optimum patient care. Appropriate funding for wages must be set aside and wage parity should exist across the health care system.*
  - *Increase funding for beds and programs for people with serious mental illness.*
  - *Improve lengths of stay and care. No one should be forced to leave hospital before they are sufficiently recovered. The level of care should be based on patient need, not budget needs.*
  
- **Home care services.**
  - *Develop community-based health care with democratically elected boards reflecting local constituencies, patients and health care staff. Decision-making should be open and transparent.*
  - *Provide all home care services through one publicly-funded program in each community. This would deliver nursing, therapy, homemaking, personal support, care management, and placement services. This accessibility makes it easier for those who require home care. There will be no user fees for non-profit services.*
  - *Increase integration of service, teamwork, and continuity of care while decreasing duplication and inefficiencies. There is more than enough need for home care to employ all those currently working in the system.*

- *Eliminate profit making from illness by:*
  - *stopping competitive bidding for long term and community health care;*
  - *stopping the divestment of public sector community health care staff, and*
  - *introducing direct provision of community health care by public sector organizations, accountable to the public. Successor rights must apply for affected workers.*
- **Primary health care.**
  - *Must be publicly funded, administered and delivered. Primary care practices must have a structure and culture that ensures democratically control through a community board with input by patients, providers and advocates.*
  - *Physician control of health care must end. Primary care organizations must draw on the skill of a range of health care providers: therapists, dentists, nutritionists, nurse practitioners, dental hygienists, doctors, RNs, RPNs, midwives, occupational therapists, optometrists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, laboratory technologists, and social workers. These providers comprise the primary health care system.*
  - *Services should be accessible 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, all year round. Doctors and all health care providers must be moved off fee-for-service payments and onto salaries, which should be the payment basis for all primary health care providers.*