

**Front commun  
pour la justice sociale- N.-B.**  
236 rue St George, pièce 412  
Moncton, NB, E1C 1W1



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for Social Justice**  
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Moncton, NB, E1C 1W1

Open letter

December 8, 2017

The Honorable Benoît Bourque  
Minister of Health  
HSBC Place, P.O. Box 5100  
Fredericton (New Brunswick), E3B 5G8

**Subject: Opposition to the Privatization of Health services**

Dear Minister Bourque,

The *NB Common Front for Social Justice Inc.* opposes categorically your government decision to transfer the management of the Extra-Mural Program and of Tele-Care to *Medavie Blue Cross*. We also oppose the handing over of management of environmental and food services, and of patient transportation to the multinational *Sodexo*.

Moreover, we are very worried by the present trend towards privatization of more and more of our public services. We note the construction and management of new long-term care homes by *Shannex*, the choice of *Medavie Blue Cross* to manage the New Brunswick Drug Plan, and department support for *Canadian Plasma Resources* setting up their private for-profit plasma clinic in this province.

Dear Minister, fifty six years ago Canadians have decided to build a public healthcare system for themselves and their families, because the existing private system was unable to satisfy the needs. Our present universal healthcare system allows all citizens to receive quality care no matter the size of their wallets, no matter their origin, no matter their place of residence. Our universal healthcare system is a public good and a great source of pride for all-

Your government's current trend towards the privatization of important pieces of our public healthcare system will have devastating consequences on the quality of services rendered, it will decrease citizens' democratic control on the system, and it will also erode governmental accountability.

Privatization is commonly justified by alluding to the unverified notion that management by the private sector is less expensive. And when it is shown that there will be no savings for the taxpayers, the argument becomes one of greater

efficiency on the part of the private sector. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is a well-known fact that the survival of private corporations like *Sodexo* and *Shannex* depends on their profitability. As for not-for-profit private entities such as *Medavie Blue Cross*, even if it is not called profit, an important part of the cost of services goes into reinvestments in other regions of the country and on the remuneration of highly paid senior executives who are not accountable to the public contrary to senior public servants who do.. To be profitable, corporations have few options: increase prices, reduce their operating costs, or cut services. Past experience has shown that the privatization of public services usually result, first, in services being cut or in their quality being reduced. In a rural province like ours, we can easily predict that the services in the most rural areas will be negatively impacted.

The transfer of the management of health services to the private sector will result in a loss of public expertise and control. The managers who, during all these past years, have run our public healthcare services and have acquired great expertise will either lose their jobs or will cross over to the private sector. When our hospitals, nursing homes, Extra-Mural Program, and Tele-Care services are managed by public sector employees in the interest of the decisions and the way things are done are not the same as when an organization is managed primarily in the interest of the company. It is public control that the government surrenders when it privatizes our public healthcare services.

Privatization also means a fragmentation of our healthcare services into smaller scattered pieces. With your Department's most recent decisions, this will mean that at least four different private entities will now involved in the delivery of our public healthcare: *Medavie Blue Cross* (Ambulance NB, Extra-Mural, Tele-Care, NB Drug Plan), *Sodexo* (food and environmental services, and patient transportation), *Shannex* (nursing homes), and *Canadian Plasma Resources* (plasma). The coordination of care within our public system will suffer and citizens are those who will pay the price

Our public healthcare system is paid for with public funds and is currently for the most part managed by responsible public servants who are held accountable and who have to answer to our elected in the House of Commons and the Legislative Assembly. With privatization, our elected officials will lose their control over services and citizens will lose the ability to influence the future orientations of their public healthcare system.

Dear Minister, our public healthcare system is tremendously important and very dear to our hearts. New Brunswick's Extra-Mural Program, for one, is recognized nationally as a model to follow for the delivery of home based services. So, instead of transferring services from the public sector to the private sector, we recommend you focus your energies on improving our present system with the introduction of new programs like, for instance, a new national pharmacare program that would benefit millions of Canadians across the land.

It is for all these reasons that the *NB Common Front for Social Justice Inc.* will join the large and increasing coalition of community organizations and unions that oppose the privatization of healthcare services. We strenuously urge you to reconsider.

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Sincerely,  
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Pauline Gallant, co chair

Johanne Petitpas, co chair