



WE OWN IT – LET’S KEEP IT

Strong public services are the foundation of a decent society. Public services are, by their very definition, open to all members of the public and therefore of benefit to all members of the public. In the 150 years since Canadian Confederation, working people have struggled to establish programs and services that are universal, affordable, and accessible by people from all walks of life and all income levels.

After years of price gouging by private monopolies, the people of Ontario created a public electricity system and Toronto’s first Black City Councillor William Hubbard led the fight to establish Toronto Hydro. A public referendum supported the Toronto Transit Commission replacing private streetcars, a public health office was established, water and sewage treatment systems developed, and public schools expanded.

After the Second World War we won public healthcare and pensions, built social housing, founded a community college system, expanded universities and social services, built airports and highways. Today’s public sector includes everything from liquor stores to childcare centres.

On the other hand management and oversight of privatized services are, by their very definition, private and therefore of benefit primarily to investors. There is ample evidence that privatized public services provide lower quality services to fewer members of the public. There is also ample evidence that privatized public services cost more because of their need to generate profit for wealthy investors;

Proponents of privatizing public services have a consistent track record of breaking promises to maintain or even improve quality while reducing costs. From the billion pound fiasco of the London Underground to the sewage system in Hamilton, to the gouging of commuters by Highway 407, privatization costs more and delivers less.

Despite the immense pressure by global capital to gain control of public assets and services, a growing number of communities around the world are reaping significant benefit by insourcing services that had been previously privatized or outsourced. In Germany there is widespread “re-municipalization” of energy services in order to both save money and access a key lever for environmental achievements. In Toronto we have successfully resisted the plan of Mayor Tory to sell off Toronto Hydro and Parking Authority and contract out solid waste collection. At the federal level, CUPW has led the fight against privatizing Canada Post and is campaigning for the re-establishment of public banking.

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We need to focus on shifting public opinion against privatization and encouraging more communities to call a moratorium on future privatizations and outsourcing. It's time to go on the offensive to realize the significant benefits of recapturing services and assets that should belong to the people.

The Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

1. Continue to work diligently with affiliates, community partners and the NDP to protect all public services and assets owned by the Canadian people.
2. Campaign to restore public ownership of all services or assets that have been privatized.
3. Endorse OPSEU's We Own It campaign and CUPE's Toronto Can Do Better campaign.

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