



POLLING ON P3s / PRIVATIZATION

In April 2006, the Ontario Federation of Labour conducted polling and focus groups in order to discover what Ontarians know about P3s and the privatization of public services. Questions also tested messaging and evaluated government performance on the issue.

Health care still ranks as the top of mind issue for people in Ontario, but the issue of privatization is hardly on the radar. 47% of those polled said the situation in health care is getting worse instead of better, and 48% were dissatisfied with the performance of the provincial government on the issue.

Awareness of P3s and their possible effect on health care and other public services is, however, quite low. Among the general public only 9% said they knew a great deal about P3s, and 43% said they knew “some” or “little” about them. Among union members the numbers were slightly higher, with 13% saying they knew a great deal, and 48% saying they knew “some” or “little” about P3s. Awareness was highest among older (55+) and more affluent (\$100k+) Ontarians.

Those who said they favour some level of privatization tended to be male (34%), over 55 (33%), earning over \$100k (46%), and PC voters (43%). Those who said they opposed any privatization whatsoever tended to be female (71%), between the ages of 25 and 44 (71%), earning less than \$50k (77%), NDP voters (81%), and union members (78%).

Those who said they were pro-privatization were most strongly influenced by the notion that private operations are more efficient, and that government standards would maintain the quality of service. Those who opposed privatization were most strongly influenced by concerns about health care money being spent on profit or financing instead of on treatment and care. When asked who wins and who loses from a privately-owned hospital, 73% said private owners were the winners and 57% said either patients or taxpayers were the losers. Walkerton and the 407 toll highway were also cited frequently by focus group participants as examples of the disasters of privatization.