



## Pro-P3 poll sidesteps reality

OTTAWA – The latest poll from a pro-privatization lobby group shows the false promises of public-private partnerships (P3s) unravel when Canadians experience the reality of these schemes.

“The Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships (CCPPP) paints a very rosy picture with its P3 questions, creating a scenario where respondents might believe they are the magic bullet for our infrastructure problems. Their ‘what if’ approach sidesteps the reality that P3s waste public dollars. In B.C., the province that’s experimented most with P3s, citizens have experienced higher costs, delays, and lower quality, along with compromised accountability and transparency,” says CUPE National President Paul Moist.

Those experiences are reflected in the CCPPP’s own poll, which shows support for P3s is lowest and continues to decline in British Columbia. Support is also weaker than the national average in Ontario, where the cost overrun for a series of privatized P3 hospitals is approaching \$1 billion.

“In B.C., projects like the Canada Line have revealed the true colours of P3s. The Canada Line costs have risen nearly \$500 million, and the public sector holds the bag for meeting ridership targets. Meanwhile other projects that have stayed public, like the water systems in Vancouver and Whistler, are on-time and under budget,” says Moist.

Other provinces are just venturing into major P3s. Québec citizens have recently had trouble scrutinizing the province’s first major P3 deal, for a stretch of Highway 25. The contract was released with key details blacked out.

“These deals are structured to hide the fact that P3s are bad public policy. Yet the federal Conservatives are in lockstep with the CCPPP, promoting privatization through their new ‘Building Canada’ infrastructure plan,” adds Moist. “The plan contains very little new cash after you cut through the spin. What’s new are the conditions forcing municipalities to consider privatizing water, sewage, transportation and other vital community services.”

The Conservatives are also planning a new federal agency dedicated to promoting privatization, which will also assess P3 projects. But objective assessments will be difficult, given the office’s inherent conflict of interest. The *Federal Accountability Act* excluded contracts and P3s from increased accountability and transparency provisions, making citizen oversight difficult.

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The poll does confirm Canadians' consistent and growing concern about the state of the country's infrastructure. The most recent breakdown of the infrastructure deficit, released last week by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, highlights the urgency.

“Our figures show funding to municipalities is falling short by as much as \$7 billion a year. This isn't whining. It's the very real consequence of nearly 20 years of federal and provincial offloading and cuts. The solution is straightforward. We need increased long-term funding to municipalities – without privatization strings attached. Evidence shows publicly-funded and delivered infrastructure and services provide better value for money,” said Moist.

Visit [cupe.ca/economics](http://cupe.ca/economics) for CUPE's analysis on municipal transfers and the Building Canada fund, and [cupe.ca/privatization](http://cupe.ca/privatization) for background on the problems with P3s.

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