



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

Judy Darcy reveals lessons from UK experiment with P3 schemes

In response to a column about the UK's P3 successes secretary-business manager, Judy Darcy, reminded Vancouver readers who really paid for Britain's privatization -- taxpayers and patients.

The following letter appeared in the Vancouver Sun on November 16, 2006.

Re: P3s are proving their worth, Issues & Ideas, Nov. 13

Taxpayers should remain skeptical about the long-term costs of using public-private partnerships to build hospitals and other public projects, despite their endorsement by the B.C. Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber president John Winters's selective reference to the British experience as sound rationale for this province's P3 policy -- recently extended to include all major capital projects-- doesn't reflect growing criticism of P3s on that side of the pond.

In fact, on the very day the new policy was being announced, the opposition Conservative Party was urging the Blair government to provide local health authorities with more flexibility over financing arrangements, not less. The Conservative health critic panned P3 schemes as a costly "straitjacket."

The 14-year-old experiment with P3 schemes in the U.K is controversial because of its demonstrated impact on front-line health services. Windfall profits by P3 consortia -- resulting from construction shortcuts and lucrative refinancing arrangements -- have been linked to sub-standard facilities and massive reductions in service levels to patients.

As long as the B.C. government agency charged with promoting P3s is also charged with assessing their worth, taxpayers won't know if they're getting value for money until it's too late. Instead of learning from the U.K. experience, we'll be doomed to repeat it.

Judy Darcy
Secretary-Business Manager
Hospital Employees' Union

November 17, 2006

