

# MAKE IT UNIVERSAL!



Substance use treatment services are as much a part of healthcare as hospitals and doctor's offices. Yet they aren't covered under universal healthcare. Without access to high-quality treatment on demand, people, families, and communities pay the price.<sup>1</sup> We need to make sure everyone, no matter where they're from or how much money they make, can access top quality care when and where they need it.

**UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY, NOT-FOR-PROFIT TREATMENT SERVICES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO EVERY PERSON SEEKING HELP WITH SUBSTANCE USE.**

Right now, too many people seeking help in Canada must deal with long wait lists<sup>2</sup> and gaps in service between detox and treatment. People already struggling are forced to spend their savings on for-profit unregulated treatment with a one-size-fits-all approach and no guarantee of quality.

**CANADIANS BELIEVE IN UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE. IT'S TIME TO DEMAND IT IS TRULY UNIVERSAL.**

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1. Rush, Brian, and Karen Urbanoski. "Seven Core Principles of Substance Use Treatment System Design to Aid in Identifying Strengths, Gaps, and Required Enhancements." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Supplement*, no. s18, Jan. 2019, pp. 9-21, <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsads.2019.s18.9>.

2. [A Public Health Approach to Substance Use Handbook](#) | Canadian Public Health Association and Centre of Excellence for Women's Health

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## *A MATTER OF FAIRNESS*

No one should have to forgo healthcare because they cannot afford it. Our current approach to treatment creates a two-tier system, where some people pay out-of-pocket for private treatment and others rely on an overburdened public system with long wait times.

## *WELL-BEING FOR ALL*

Supporting people in their well-being related to substance use helps us all. Expanding universal healthcare to include substance use services will ease the strain on our acute care system.<sup>3</sup> That's because if people can access quality substance use supports, they may not need to turn to acute care for help.

## *KEEP PROFIT OUT OF CARE*

Currently, many of the available substance use treatment options in Canada are private, for-profit and unregulated. We must prevent the for-profit treatment industry from taking advantage of the current gap in services that excludes substance use from universal healthcare. There should be no profit in healthcare, including substance use treatment services.

## *CHOICE AND QUALITY*

Canadians deserve access to a high-quality substance use treatment system that is properly regulated, culturally safe and effective. Choice in care and provider is a right Canadians expect; treatment services should be no different. We must follow the prevailing evidence and work with people to provide care that works best for them. Whether that means includes abstinence-based programs, opioid agonist therapy, harm reduction services, or cultural supports, all options must be on the table to provide the very best quality services on demand.

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Amid a toxic drug crisis, we need to use every tool at our disposal to ensure that help is there when and where it is needed. Under the guiding principles embedded in the Canada Health Act – that healthcare should be publicly administered, accessible, portable, comprehensive, and universal – **we envision a not-for-profit system that truly leaves no one behind.**

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3. [Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms Data](#) | Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

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