

2023

# Pre-Budget Submission

TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS



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AMAPCEO  
ONTARIO'S PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES



**Dave Bulmer**

PRESIDENT, AMAPCEO

Dear Members of the Committee,

Congratulations on your re-election and thank you for the work you do on behalf of the people of his province.

As the union for more than 15,000 professionals working in the public interest in Ontario, we are pleased to provide four recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs:

1. End the Bill 124 appeal
2. Keep health care public
3. Guarantee paid sick days
4. Curtail use of consultants, and improve transparency

We believe each of these recommendations would improve service delivery for Ontarians, make government more effective, and boost our province's reputation as a great place to live, work, learn, and grow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Bulmer".

Dave Bulmer  
President & CEO

## End the Bill 124 Appeal

In November, the Ontario Superior Court found Bill 124 unconstitutional, with Justice Koehnen ruling that the Act substantially interfered with collective bargaining.

AMAPCEO believes the finding of the Court to be correct in its interpretation. Bill 124 was unconstitutional and moreover unnecessary in its application.

Rather than abide by the Court's ruling, the government has chosen to prolong resolution by appealing the decision.

It's time to stop.

Show respect to the hundreds of thousands of affected public service employees—and save the citizens of Ontario the unnecessary legal costs of the appeal—by ending the appeal now.

*Show respect for thousands  
of public service employees  
by ending the appeal now*

### **AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:**

**Ending the appeal of Bill 124.**

## Keep Health Care Public

The Premier recently announced that the government intends to expand the number of medical procedures performed at privately-run clinics.

In making this announcement, the government attempted to reassure Ontarians that they will use their OHIP cards to access these services at no extra cost. It would be naïve, however, not to be concerned that this new health care delivery scheme is a significant step toward further privatization of health care.

The government has already outsourced some medical services to private clinics, which have come under fire for upselling patients and charging them add-on fees.

One example is cataract operations. Ontario's Auditor General found private clinics delivering publicly funded surgeries misled patients to pay for unnecessary services out of pocket.<sup>1</sup>

***Ontario's Auditor General found private clinics misled patients to pay for unnecessary services out of pocket***

The same report warned that the Ministry of Health has “no oversight of what additional fees physicians charge patients.”<sup>2</sup>

It's not hard to imagine other for-profit clinics engaging in these same practices to make further profits at Ontarians' expense.

While the government claims this expansion of services at private clinics is intended to address the surgical backlog caused by the pandemic, the money to be spent on private clinics could just as easily be invested in the existing public health care system. Indeed, money invested this way would go much further.

One idea has been advanced by Dr. Robert Bell, both a former Deputy Minister of Health and a former hospital CEO. Dr. Bell pointed out that not-for-profit “community surgery centres” could perform the same surgeries that the government intends to move to for-profit providers. With studies showing that public community surgery centres can perform 30 per cent more surgeries

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1 Ontario, Office of the Auditor General, “Value for Money Audit: Outpatient Surgeries,” December 2021: 5.

2 Ibid: 7.

than a hospital, Dr. Bell's suggestion would work to clear the province's surgical backlog while also maintaining public control.<sup>3</sup>

Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare practitioners have been ringing the alarm about the state of Ontario's hospitals for years now.

What's more, the public servants who provide frontline care to the people of Ontario have offered numerous suggestions on how to fix these problems. These suggestions range from repealing—and not appealing—the wage-restraining Bill 124, to putting in place stronger public health measures to prevent the transmission of illnesses, to guaranteeing paid sick days for all workers in Ontario.

The government has chosen to disregard these suggestions. Instead, they have chosen to pump public money into privately-run clinics. This move to divert taxpayer money to private businesses threatens to drain even more resources from already-strained public hospitals.

In its forthcoming budget, the government could choose to turn over a new leaf—to value and support public services and the valuable workers who provide them.

AMAPCEO recommends that the government reconsider this move toward private care and instead seek public sector solutions to the province's health care problems.

**AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:**

**Keep health care public, affordable, and efficient by investing in public sector solutions.**

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Bell, "Ontario does not need more for-profit surgery," *Globe and Mail*, 17 January 2023. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-ontario-does-not-need-more-for-profit-surgery>.

## Guarantee Paid Sick Days

No worker should have to report to work when seriously ill.

The unfortunate reality is that many workers in Ontario do not feel like this a choice they can make. Simply put, these workers cannot sacrifice the income they would lose by not working.

A lasting lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is the necessity of access to paid sick days for all workers. It is arguably, the greatest health and safety concern of public service workplaces.

We have all learned, in vivid detail, how infection can be spread at work, including time spent on shift, on break, and commuting.

Yet, incredibly, in Ontario there is still no permanent, legislated access to paid sick days.

This can and must change.

While business lobbyists bray without evidence that paid sick leave is “unaffordable,” the fact is that this is false.<sup>4</sup>

*Guaranteed paid sick days is the norm throughout the world—and businesses thrive*

To the contrary, a comprehensive study by the Centre for the Future of Work estimated that the cost to employers of implementing 10 paid sick days amounted to a gross cost of just 0.21% of existing business payments.<sup>5</sup>

Late last year, the federal government implemented 10 days of paid sick days in all federally regulated private sector workplaces, a move the Canadian Bankers Association called “the right thing” to do.<sup>6</sup>

Importantly, access to guaranteed paid sick days is also the norm throughout the world. An OECD report notes that the “sick pay period lasts 5–15 days in

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4 See e.g., Ontario Chamber of Commerce, “Ontario’s Paid Sick Day Program is a Step in the Right Direction,” 28 April 2021. <https://occ.ca/mediareleases/ontarios-paid-sick-day-program-is-a-step-in-the-right-direction/>.

5 Jim Stanford, “Estimates of the Gross Cost of Paid Sick Day Provisions in British Columbia,” November 2021: 25. <https://centreforfuturework.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/BC-Sick-Days-Cost-Report.pdf>.

6 Canada, Employment and Social Development, “10 days of paid sick leave now in force for nearly 1 million federally regulated workers across Canada,” 1 December 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2022/12/10-days-of-paid-sick-leave-now-in-force-for-nearly-1million-federally-regulated-workers-across-canada.html>.

most OECD countries.”<sup>7</sup> Also importantly, businesses thrive in these countries.

AMAPCEO recommends that the government must immediately amend the Employment Standards Act to mandate 10 paid sick days for all workers.

**AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:**

**Legislating 10 guaranteed paid sick days for all workers.**

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7 OECD, “Paid sick leave to protect income, health and jobs through the COVID-19 crisis,” 2 July 2020: 4. [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134\\_134797-9iq8w1fnju](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134797-9iq8w1fnju).

## Curtail Use of Consultants & Improve Transparency

In her 2022 annual report, Ontario's Auditor General found that the government significantly overpays for IT consultants, with consultants paid double what the salary for full-time staff would have been. Further, the Auditor General found numerous instances of IT consultants being paid more than the daily rate recommended by the Treasury Board.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, overpaying for consultants is not limited to IT. Recent revelations at the federal level demonstrate the degree to which management consultancy firms are used by governments across the country.

An Ontario example of this can be found in the hiring of McKinsey at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Auditor General recounted:

on March 25, the Secretary of Cabinet undertook an urgent sole-sourced procurement of consulting services at a cost of \$1.6 million to develop a crisis response organizational structure for COVID 19 building on The Health Command Table (an additional \$3.2 million was paid to the same consultant to assist with COVID 19 recovery planning and the reopening strategy for education). **The consultant's cost was higher than standard industry rates.**<sup>9</sup>

In this case, the Auditor General noted that consultants were retained because the government had "insufficient trained staff to assist" with this vital project.

This is a telling example of why it is essential for the public service to retain a pool of skilled and experienced staff, both in IT and throughout the full spectrum of the work public servants do.

AMAPCEO recommends that the government take immediate steps to increase its in-house expertise in IT as well as any other areas where staffing is insufficient, or staff are insufficiently trained.

Of course, governments do not only retain consultants due to a lack of expertise. Consider here the 2018 retention of EY to conduct value for money

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8 Ontario, Office of the Auditor General, "Value-for-Money Audit: Office of the Corporate Chief Information Officer," November, 2022: 3.

9 Ontario, Office of the Auditor General, "Covid-19 Preparedness and Management: Special Report on Emergency Management in Ontario—Pandemic Response," November, 2020: 17.

audits of the Ontario government, as well as to make various recommendations for future spending. Though the cost of that contract is not public information, we do know that the Ontario government possesses a Ministry of Finance as well as a Treasury Board Secretariat, both of which are staffed by knowledgeable professionals. These exist alongside the province's independent Auditor General.

There is, in other words, no shortage of available public expertise regarding the finances of the Ontario. There is no compelling reason for consultants to have been used on this project.

Spending on consultants must be brought under control.

AMAPCEO is renewing its recommendation that the Government of Ontario follow the lead of the federal government and proactively disclose the specifics of all contracts valued at over \$10,000.

In the federal disclosures, each contract includes details such as the vendor name, the contract date, a description of the contract, the value of the contract, and the contract period. The disclosed contracts are searchable online and broken down into quarterly reports.

As the federal service is plagued by its own difficulties with the use of consultants, this sort of disclosure is clearly not a panacea. However, greater transparency will allow for greater external oversight of how the government utilizes consultants. This data will, hopefully, constrain the overuse—and overpayment—of consultants.

*Greater transparency will  
bring greater oversight to  
save public dollars*

**AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:**

**Bring spending on private consultants under control, and improve transparency through a disclosure of all government contracts of \$10,000 or more.**

## Who We Are

**AMAPCEO is the union for Ontario’s professional employees.**

Established in 1992, AMAPCEO represents more than 15,000 professionals working in the public interest in Ontario. Our members work in every ministry in the Government of Ontario and in a growing number of provincial agencies, boards, and regulators.

From policy analysts to epidemiologists and from economists to communicators, AMAPCEO members work in more than 100 communities across the province and 11 cities outside Canada.

AMAPCEO is member-driven and politically non-partisan. We protect members’ rights, defend Ontario’s public services, and advocate for better working conditions for everyone.

Our membership is educated, professional, and diverse. They are problem solvers who take pride in working hard and offering creative, evidence-based solutions to public policy issues. They are passionate about serving the public interest.

See more of  
AMAPCEO's submissions at  
[amapceo.on.ca/publications](http://amapceo.on.ca/publications)

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