

Cambie Case

Ensuring equal access to health care is a core Canadian value. Our health care system is based on the principle that care should be based on need, not on the ability to pay.

Our public health care system is currently under attack through a lawsuit in British Columbia. Brian Day has filed a lawsuit challenging BC's health care law to avoid penalties for illegal billing of patients at his private, for-profit clinic, Cambie Surgeries. He claims that he wants to reduce wait times for medical services, but what he really wants is to make more profits.



The Canadian Health Coalition is monitoring this case closely and getting the word out.

Why does it matter?

This is one of the most significant constitutional cases in Canadian history. If Day wins, he'll open the floodgates to a US-style private health care system. Wealthy patients will be able to jump to the front of the line by paying for medical services, while others won't be able to afford health care.

Although this case is being heard in British Columbia, it will likely be appealed and end up in the Supreme Court of Canada.

Take action

- Sign up for updates on the case and make a donation to the BC Health Coalition's Legal Defense Fund: www.savemedicare.ca
- Share information about this important case with other public health care advocates.



Background

Canada's Health Care System

To access federal funding for health care, the provinces must meet certain requirements. They must cover the costs of medically necessary services provided by doctors and hospitals. They must also prevent 'extra-billing' (when patients are billed on top of the amount that's billed to the public system). If the provinces allow extra-billing, the federal government can withhold part of their funding for health care.

The federal and provincial governments haven't been doing a very good job of making sure these requirements are respected. Across the country, doctors and clinics have been billing patients illegally.

The Lawsuit

In 2007, the BC Government notified several private, for-profit clinics that they intended to investigate complaints they'd received from several patients about illegal billing. In response, Day filed a lawsuit against the BC Government.



Day wants to be able to bill patients directly and bill the public system for medically-necessary services. This practice is currently illegal. Day claims that allowing extra-billing would reduce wait times for health care.

In fact, the evidence shows that allowing patients to jump the line by paying for medical services actually increases wait times in the public system. Since medical staff and equipment are limited, private clinics take precious resources away from the public system. This results in longer wait times.

Timeline

The trial began in 2016. After many procedural delays the trial is expected to end in 2019.