

## 10 health stories that mattered this week: May 1–7

- Nearly 35 000 Toronto-area children stayed home from school on May 4 as their [parents protested new sexual education curriculum](#). At least one school reported an absentee rate of more than 90%. Despite the protest, Premier Kathleen Wynne said the province will not back down on the changes.
- Nearly 40% of Ontario [youth seeking mental health treatment](#) wait a year or more for care, reports Children's Mental Health Ontario. The association of more than 85 community-based mental health centres estimates that more than 6000 youth are waiting for treatment and expects that number to double by 2016. According to the report, reducing these waits will require a \$30 million investment.
- Ontario privacy experts decry the complicated process for [prosecuting medical record snoops](#). When a health-privacy breach occurs, overlapping investigations by the health facility, privacy commissioner and police all must be completed within six months for the attorney general to lay charges. There have been no successful prosecutions under Ontario's health privacy law since it came into force in 2004.
- British Columbia launches a [crack-down on problem pharmacies](#) to curb ballooning costs associated with methadone. The province pays pharmacies some of the highest fees in Canada for dispensing the drug (a single client can generate about \$6500 a year). A review uncovered abuse of the system including billing infractions and shoddy record-keeping. The province sent warnings to 46 pharmacies and all participating pharmacies must now re-enroll with BC's drug plan,
- BC likely won't deliver on its promise to provide all residents with [access to a family doctor](#) by 2015, says Health Minister Terry Lake. The Liberal government made the pledge five years ago, and in 2013 invested \$132.4 million in a program to recruit and retain new doctors as part of its re-election platform. Currently there are postings for 317 permanent family doctor positions in the province.
- Alberta sees an [increase in measles vaccinations](#) for the first time in five years. New provincial data indicate 88% of Alberta children received at least the first dose of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine in 2014, up from 85% the year before. Health officials attribute the bump to increased public awareness of measles outbreaks in 2014.
- Quebec tables [legislation to ban smoking on patios and using e-cigarettes in public buildings](#). If it becomes law, Bill 44 would also prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products and smoking in vehicles when a minor is present. It's the first update to tobacco-control legislation in the province since 2005, when the Liberal government banned smoking in bars.
- Manitoba's health system spends [\\$244 million a year on smoking-related costs](#), reports the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy in Winnipeg. Daily smokers and former daily smokers account for most of this burden.
- Newfoundland and Labrador will [cut pay for health information staff](#) by an average \$7600 as of September 2016 in response to reports of excessive raises. Senior staff at the province's Centre for Health Information will take the biggest hit; for example, the president and CEO stands to lose about \$50 000 on a projected salary of almost \$200 000. The cuts are expected to save the province about \$330 000.
- More than 200 New Brunswick health workers march to protest a [plan to privatize management of nonmedical hospital services](#) in the province. Health Minister Victor Boudreau says the move could save millions of dollars but may mean job losses. The support services affected include porters and orderlies as well as maintenance and food staff. — Lauren Vogel, *CMAJ*

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