



Canadian Health Coalition Coalition canadienne de la santé

2841 Riverside Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1V 8X7 CANADA

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

November 17, 2009

Dear Prime Minister:

This week is National Medicare Week and the Canadian Health Coalition is marking its 30th anniversary of fighting for, protecting, and encouraging the expansion of Medicare.

Like the vast majority of Canadians, we treasure and take pride in Medicare - one of the most successful public health care systems in the world. As debate over health care reform rages in the United States, Canadians celebrate the 25th anniversary of the *Canada Health Act*, which enshrined accessible, universal, quality public health care to all our citizens regardless of their ability to pay.

Yet since Medicare began, it has been threatened by user fees, extra billing and privatization. Today, across Canada, private for-profit clinics are charging “facility fees”, billing patients for insured services, and allowing them to jump the queue. Prime Minister, it is time for your government to demonstrate federal leadership by taking immediate action on violations of the *Canada Health Act*.

We respectfully ask you to use the occasion of National Medicare Week in this anniversary year of the *Canada Health Act* to show federal leadership on health care.

We ask you to:

- Celebrate the legacy of Medicare by publicly reaffirming your government’s commitment to the principles of the *Canada Health Act* as well as adequate and secure federal funding;
- Protect Medicare today by immediately enforcing the *Canada Health Act* in the many cases of extra-billing, user fees, privatization and queue-jumping now spreading across the country; and
- Create the Medicare of the future by taking immediate steps to initiate a national public drug plan (Pharmacare) that will provide better access, more value for money, and better prescribing practices.

Looking ahead, the challenge for the future is to expand Medicare to respond to the changing health needs of Canadians. Today, prescription drugs save lives, but only when the people who need them can afford to buy them. We urge you, Prime Minister, to show leadership by initiating a national public drug plan that ensures all Canadians have access to affordable, safe, and appropriately prescribed medications no matter where they live or work, or their ability to pay.

Mr. Prime Minister, Canadians in all parts of this country and of all political affiliations are united in their support for our public healthcare system. They are looking to you and your government to join them in publicly celebrating our proud legacy by taking action to protect Medicare and initiating immediate steps to create the Medicare of tomorrow.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Connors, RN (Ret'd)
Chairperson, Canadian Health Coalition

Shirley Douglas, OC
Daughter of Tommy Douglas, Father of Medicare

Hon. Monique Bégin, PC, OC, QC, FRSC
Minister of Health and Welfare (1977-79, 1980-84)

Robert McMurtry, MD, FRCSC, FACS
Former Dean, Faculty of Medicine at University of Western Ontario

Sharon Sholzberg-Gray, B.A., B.Sc., B.C.L., DESD
Past-President and CEO of the Canadian Healthcare Association

Robert G. Evans, PhD,
Director, Population Health Program, University of British Columbia



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