

Statement from NCWC

In response to the article in The Globe and Mail, "MDs launch fresh bid for two-tier care," Tuesday 31 July 2007.

Universal Health Care

The National Council of Women of Canada, founded in 1893, is strongly committed to Canada's one-tier health system. Our universal health care system is one of which Canada can be very proud. NCWC have continuously urged that the universality and excellence of the medicare system in Canada be maintained. This universality has guaranteed equality of service to all citizens regardless of financial circumstances or provincial or territorial location.

The Canadian Medical Association is obviously testing the waters by initiating a debate on the right to practice in both public and private systems. The Globe article mentions that in a policy paper delivered on July 30th by the CMA, it states that governments should consider contracting publicly funded services to the private sector, that Canadians should have more access to private insurance for private care, and that doctors should not be limited to working within one system or the other.

If a two-tier system were implemented, how many doctors would stay in the medicare system? How many would devote a majority of their time to private patients who will pay a premium? Who has first dibs on surgery time? Would the medicare patient have to wait even longer for surgery because private patients have filled the queues?

We do not understand how any two-tier system could be anything but discriminatory, and it would be just another example of "the haves" having it all, and "the have-nots" falling between ever-widening cracks.

While we acknowledge that our system of healthcare is not perfect, we and the CMA should be looking for viable ways of improving it, not dismantling it. If doctors are in short supply, train more, and actively work to have physicians with foreign credentials integrated more readily into the system. We also need shorter wait-times, but there are new projects in place which are aimed at solutions.

This sort of debate, which the outgoing president of the CMA has initiated, seems frivolous and annoying. His time would be better spent working to improve what we have, and what many other countries envy, instead of looking for ways to dismantle and demolish.

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