

MEDICARE

WATCH

FEBRUARY 2006

Private care is no cure

NEWS ITEM
COPEMAN CORP PLANS TO OPEN
THREE NEW CLINICS IN ONTARIO

WE LIKE TO THINK OF
OURSELVES AS THE CLUB
MED OF HEALTH CARE.



Clinically dead?

Activists prompt government to take a closer look at clinics

OTTAWA (FEB. 3, 2006)

Ontario will not give the private, for-profit Copeman Clinics a free ride.

Closer scrutiny of the Copeman operation was prompted by the release of a legal opinion commissioned by the Ontario Health Coalition.

The report prompted the governments of BC and Ontario to publicly issue warnings to the clinic.

If the clinics break the Ontario laws designed to protect Medicare they will be fined, warned Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty.

Under Ontario's Bill 8, companies can be fined \$25,000 for each patient charged a fee to access provincially-insured health services; individuals can face \$10,000 in fines.

Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman told reporters, "We have a law in Ontario that says we're not going to stand idly by and see patients charged a fee in order to be able to access an insured service."

Clients at the Copeman Clinic in British Columbia pay an enrolment fee of \$1,200, and an annual fee of \$2,300.

Ontario's law allows annual fees only for those services that are not covered by the province's health system.

The Copeman Clinics claim the annual fee does not allow patients to jump the queue and that the fee only covers non-insured services. Critics of the clinic strongly disagree.

Top 6 reasons why private care is no cure

- 1 Wait times in the public system will get even longer.
- 2 Quality of care will go down.
- 3 Health care costs will go up.
- 4 Business costs will go up.
- 5 American medical corporations will invade the Canadian health care system.
- 6 Basic Canadian values will be undercut.

WAIT LONGER

Wait times in the public system will get even longer.

A serious shortage of health professionals is a main reason why there are currently long wait times for some key medical procedures in our public system.

But a parallel, private system would only make matters worse. It would drain scarce health professionals out of the public system. There are only so many physicians, nurses, pharmacists and technicians—and the more you take out of the public system to work for queue jumpers, the longer the public waiting list will get.

CARE DOWN

Quality of care will go down.

The private health insurance companies deny coverage and for-profit providers skimp on quality in order to save money and increase profits. There's no hiding this fact.

For-profit companies also divert money out of patient care and into outrageously high executive pay and benefits packages and advertising campaigns. When private, for-profit medical corporations have to choose between our health and their wealth, we will always lose.

COSTS UP

Health care costs will go up.

Our single-tier Medicare system is a health care efficiency marvel. Study after study shows it is the most cost-efficient way to finance and deliver medical care. The US, which has a private system, spends more than

50% more per person.

Two of the most obvious reasons for this are: first, administrative costs are a lot higher in a private system because there are so many companies with huge bureaucracies sorting out the quality and quantity of care they will give; and second, for-profit providers charge everybody (governments, individual clients and insurance companies) a lot more because they must make a profit and maximize return to their shareholders.

BUSINESSES LOSE

Businesses in Canada will pay more.

A parallel, private system would be a big economic catastrophe for industry in Canada.

Just ask General Motors. The GM health care bill in the US is \$5.6 billion this year and this works out to \$1,500 for every car produced.

Public Medicare gives all businesses in Canada a huge competitive advantage. And it is vital in attracting a lot more new investment into Canada's economy.

USA INVADES

American medical corporations will storm the Canadian health care system.

US medical insurance and service corporations are like a 900-pound gorilla. Once we open the door to them—even a crack—they'll muscle their way right in and pretty much take over.

The wedge is international trade laws that require us to allow foreign businesses to operate in Canada in the same way we allow Canadian businesses to operate.

However, right now there are only a few for-profit health care operators in Canada. So it is unlikely anyone could use the trade treaties against us. With a parallel, private system of care in place, our protection from trade treaty challenges crumbles.

And this would make it practically impossible to curb the growth of two-tier medicine or to restore a universal, public health insurance system.

VALUES UNDERCUT

Allowing the rich to buy faster care is a perversion of basic Canadian values.

Canadians overwhelmingly support the core values that underpin our public Medicare system—equity, fairness and solidarity. It is a perversion of these Canadian values to allow a parallel, private system where money alone determines who gets the best care and how fast.

If we let the rich jump the line and get faster medical care what's next? Do we let the rich pay for private courts too? Quicker 911 response and fire and police protection?

We want our governments to renovate the public system in ways that are consistent with our distinct Canadian values. We don't want our system torn down to make way for a US-style health care model where millions are left to suffer with no care at all.

CALL OR EMAIL the prime minister and the premiers. Tell them all that private care is no cure.

Tell them a parallel, private health care system is the wrong prescription.

Tell them the right prescription is to restore and expand Medicare according to the basic principles we used to create it in the first place.

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