

To the Editor, Toronto Star in response to “Canadian Medical Association (CMA) urges private delivery of health care, 30 July 2007”:

CMA’s “Medicare Plus” is “Medicare Minus”

“Medicare Plus”, as conceived by the Canadian Medical Association, will be “Medicare Minus” for most Canadians. Just like all those “Plus” programs that draw divisions between consumers, this profit-driven venture will serve a select few, leaving the rest of us with poorer quality care - or worse, scrambling to access any care at all.

Solutions for health care must be solutions for everyone.

The good news is solutions for everyone exist. Our universal single-tier publicly funded system is already delivering innovations that have reduced waiting times and administrative costs, increased access to care, and helped Canadians live longer healthier lives. The bad news is that our policymakers are not implementing these solutions fast enough, leaving the door open for the CMA to promote its for-profit plans.

We know many, if not most, Canadian physicians, still believe in Medicare’s founding principles, and reject two-tier medicine. Ironically, the CMA and its leaders who promote a two-tier system are driven by the same forces that derailed Tommy Douglas plans for a Second Stage of Medicare fifty years ago. The Second Stage of Medicare would have introduced a series of reforms that would have minimized the challenges we face today. If fully realized, the Second Stage would have re-organized our health system so it could perform more effectively and equitably, increase access to care through the use of collaborative teams, and focus more on population health and illness prevention.

During the next provincial election and any upcoming federal campaigns, political parties will be pressed to re-activate the original vision for a Second Stage of Medicare and accelerate the solutions that only our publicly funded, universal single tier system can deliver.

Let’s have health solutions that benefit all Canadians. Let’s close the door on plans that will leave most of us behind.

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