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## **CHAULLI DECISION PROTECTS ONLY THOSE WHO CAN PAY**

The Medical Reform Group of Ontario today criticized the Supreme Court of Canada's decision for putting the rights of wealthier Canadians ahead of those of the majority.

"Two tier medicine violates the rights of those on the lower tier," said MRG spokesperson Dr. Gordon Guyatt. "The way private medicine will play out in Canada, as it has in Australia and Britain, most of us will be in that lower tier."

In contrast to the majority, the minority opinion in the court paid attention to the evidence, and acknowledged that a parallel private system will actually worsen care, and waiting times, for those covered only by public insurance.

"Private insurance threatens publicly funded care," said a second MRG spokesperson, Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi. "We have a shortage of both doctors and nurses. Many, and perhaps the best, will be drawn into the private sector, leaving greater shortages in the public system."

There are other reasons that a parallel private system will compromise publicly-funded care. Private insurance is associated with large administrative costs, and money that could be spent on delivering health care is wasted. When private insurance arrives, the most powerful political constituency - those with power, education, and money - leave the public system. The political pressure to maintain the system - the only thing that ensures public health care remains high quality - decreases.

"This decision has scared Canadians, and with good reason," Dr. Guyatt concluded. "The right wing wants to deny it, but the Supreme Court ruling has started us down the road toward US-style two-tiered care. Canadians must insist that their politicians set up an effective road block - which will include ensuring timely care for all of us."

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*The Medical Reform Group is an independent association of doctors and medical students who believe that all Canadians should have equitable access to high-quality health care.*