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KLEIN-WAY THE WRONG WAY, DOCTORS SAY

The Medical Reform Group, an organization of physicians devoted to maintaining a high quality publicly funded, universal health care system, today denounced Ralph Klein's move toward two tier Canadian health care.

"Klein's Health Minister, Iris Evans, says that medically necessary services will still be covered," MRG spokesperson Dr. Gordon Guyatt said. "Does Evans believe that more expensive hip replacements, or podiatry care, lead to better health outcomes or not? If she does, then they are medically necessary and should be covered. If not, allowing private insurance for useless treatments means sanctioning a scam".

When pressed by reporters on the need to undercut universal, public health care, Klein pointed to Alberta's health care expenditures.

"The money issue is fundamentally a lie," said another MRG spokesperson, Ahmed Bayomi. "First of all, Canada is still spending 10% of it's GDP on health care, the same percentage as in 1992. Second, if we are worried about health care expenditure, two tier is the wrong way to go. Every study that has ever compared the two shows that publicly funded health care is less, not more expensive. It's the private Klein-way that is the road toward uncontrolled spending."

Indeed, it's ironic that Klein's announcement comes on the same day as the latest report on the disastrous effect of private pay, and private insurance, on health care costs. A just-released study of heart by-pass shows Americans pay twice as much, with health outcomes that are no better.

"Perhaps the biggest irony is that the provincial health symposium Klein held in May told him what every health policy expert knows: private pay is more expensive, and less equitable," Guyatt concluded. "Klein-way represents a triumph of ideology over evidence and good sense."

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For more information:

Dr. Gordon Guyatt-(905) 525-91409, ext 22160 or 22900; pager (905) 521-5030
Email: guyatt@mcmaster.ca

Janet Maher (416) 770-1311

Email: medicalreform@sympatico.ca