

January 11, 2007 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDICAL REFORM GROUP LAUDS ALBERTA HEALTH CARE TURNAROUND

"The latest developments in Alberta show that even right-wing governments can become sensible, and heed the evidence about the best ways of delivering health care," Medical Reform group spokesperson Ahmed Bayoumi said today.

The Alberta government cannot cure the growing costs that ail the health-care system by allowing more private-sector treatment, and the Tories went "astray" by trying to do so, new Alberta Health Minister Dave Hancock said Monday.

Hancock effectively killed notions the new Ed Stelmach government would wade into the divisive and controversial "third way" reforms former premier Ralph Klein tried to push through before being pushed by his Conservatives into retirement last year.

"I think that's where perhaps we've gone astray in the process," Hancock told reporters. "All Albertans should have access to quality care on a timely basis without regard to the bills they pay. It has to start and finish there."

"Whether his reasons are political expediency or a realization that publicly funded health care is not only more equitable, but more efficient doesn't really matter," said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Gordon Guyatt. "This is good news for Albertans – and the change of heart is good news for all Canadians."

The realization that universal coverage is necessary in a civilized society is even beginning to make inroads south of the border.

"It's only sensible that when even American Republicans like California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger are moving toward universal care, Canadians should avoid any backsliding," said Dr. Bayoumi.

"There is still the stealthy privatization of for-profit clinics offering queue-jumping for the rich to deal with," said Dr. Bayoumi. "But the Alberta experience suggests that politicians are waking up to the fact that publicly funded health care delivered by not-for-profit providers is best for Canada."

-30 -

For more information:

Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi (416) 864-5438/(416) 685-9101 (pager)

Dr. Gordon Guyatt (905) 525-9140, ext 22160 or 22900

Janet Maher (416) 787-5246; (416) 735-0698 (mobile)