

# MEDICAL REFORM GROUP

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## DOCTORS' GROUP TO GOVERNMENT: NO HEALTH CARE CUTS

A Canadian physicians' group has called on governments to refrain from cutting public services and programs, in particular health care, in response to the economic crisis.

“The current problems in health care, including excessive waiting lists and difficulty finding a family doctor, are a result of health care cuts of the 1990's, and governments' unwillingness to remedy those cuts,” said Medical Reform Group spokesperson Gordon Guyatt. “Further cuts to the system are unnecessary, and would be disastrous.”

Canada's recession of the early 1990's created large budget deficits. Paul Martin responded by huge transfer payment cuts to provinces in the mid-1990s, cuts that compromised high quality health care for Canadians.

The initial cuts to social programs, in particular health care, were more draconian than necessary. The economy rebounded in the mid 1990s, but rather than restoring adequate funding, governments awash with extra dollars implemented huge tax cuts. Subsequently, misguided priorities and unwillingness to commit to needed reforms have left the system struggling.

“Economies go through cycles,” said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi. “Panic is the wrong response to any downturn, and this downturn in particular. If governments refrain from additional tax cuts, the economic revival we will see within several years will reverse any temporary deficits. Rather than further compromising quality health care, we need to continue to rebuild the damaged Canadian health care system.”

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