

# MEDICAL REFORM GROUP

Box 40074, Toronto, Ontario M6B 4K4

November 4, 2008 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## COUILLARD ETHICS BIG PROBLEM: MDs

A Canadian physicians' group has called into question the ethics of Quebec's former health minister Philippe Couillard. Shortly after leaving government this summer, Couillard joined the company that owns Medisys health group, an investor owned for-profit company that provides health care.

"We questioned Couillard's commitment to universal, equitable health care when he was the health minister," said Medical Reform Group spokesperson Gordon Guyatt. "Couillard's behaviour on leaving office shows that our concerns were well-grounded."

As health minister Couillard presided over expansion of investor-owned for-profit health care provision, including companies that charged for insured services, thus violating the Canada Health Act. Couillard showed no concern, and no commitment to prosecute companies leading the move to two-tier health care. Days before leaving office Couillard expanded the number of procedures that publicly funded providers could outsource to for-profit providers from 3 to 50, also cutting in half their costs for permits.

"The company that Couillard is working for is directly undermining equitable delivery of physician and hospital services" said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi. "Couillard's behavior in office violated the public interest. Now he is devoting his entire energies to activities that violate the public interest."

Investor-owned for-profit companies cause problems beyond creating U.S.-style two tier health care. They bleed doctors and nurses from already over-stretched not-for-profit providers. Furthermore, their charges to public payers are higher and, on average, they deliver poorer care. Studies from the U.S. have shown higher death rates in for-profit hospitals and dialysis facilities.

"The public may wonder why politicians support for-profit health care that undermines equity and in which funds that should be going to care go to profit," Dr. Guyatt concluded. "Couillard isn't the first politician to provide the answer by moving from office to a company that will benefit from the slow destruction of universal health care."

"A cynical definition of politics is the conduct of public affairs for private interests. Sadly, Couillard's behavior tells us that cynicism is sometimes warranted."

-30-

For more information:

Dr. Gordon Guyatt 905 525 9140, ext 22160

Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi 416 670-9357

Janet Maher 416 735 0698