

Public Funding, Not For-Profit Delivery: Help for Ujjal Dosanjh

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The Medical Reform Group, an organization of physicians devoted to maintaining a high quality publicly funded, universal health care system, pledged today to help federal Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh deliver on his commitment to stop creeping privatization. The MRG's letter to Dosanjh applauds his goals, and encourages him not to back down in the face of provincial intransigence.

Minister Dosanjh has said he wants to "stem the tide of privatization and expand public delivery" of health services. The MRG supports these goals, and believes the group can help make them happen.

"MRG members have conducted the systematic literature reviews that have confirmed increased death rates and higher costs in investor-owned for-profit health facilities," said MRG spokesperson Dr. Irfan Dhalla. "The MRG can help the Minister by ensuring the public understands the importance of this evidence."

"With Premiers like Klein, Campbell and Charest asking the federal government to butt out on issues like enforcement of the Canada Health Act and investor-owned for-profit delivery, Dosanjh needs all the help he can get," added another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Rosana Pellizari. "Our doctors' group has the credibility to let people know that Dosanjh is on the right track, and the Premiers are not."

Public funding of health care, as Canada now has for physician and hospital services, is both equitable and efficient. When the majority of funding is private, as it is for prescription drugs, inefficiencies abound and costs explode.

Studies published in the top medical journals show that outcomes are better and costs are lower when private non-profit organizations like Canadian hospitals provide health services. Death rates are higher, and charges increase, when investor-owned private for-profit companies deliver care.

For-profit corporations make money by diverting resources away from patients and into the pockets of their shareholders. Non-profit clinics and hospitals are able to spend less money on marketing and

administration, and therefore spend more money on patient care. Yet, right-wing Premiers, including Gordon Campbell and Ralph Klein, want to increase investor-owned delivery of care in hospitals, surgical clinics, diagnostic test facilities, and home care.

"Canadian health care is hanging in the balance," Dr. Dhalla concluded. "The MRG will help Dosanjh ensure the outcome is what Canadians want, and need.