

## **Serious Limitations in Health Care Deal**

Medical Reform Group

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The Medical Reform Group of Ontario today made severe criticisms of the health care deal between the federal and provincial governments.

“No national home care, no pharmacare, no serious primary care reform, and no end to creeping privatization,” said MRG spokesperson Dr. Gordon Guyatt. “This deal is no success.”

In 1997 the National Health Forum called for national home care and pharmacare programs. The Romanow report and Senate Kirby reports repeated the calls. “Despite all the new federal money, in 2004 we are as far from national home care and pharmacare plans as ever,” said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Irfan Dhalla.

The current agreement provides some targets in the home care and pharmacare areas, but very little extra money. “In previous agreements, federal and provincial governments have quickly ignored their targets,” Dr. Guyatt noted. “The current agreement includes no enforcement mechanisms, and no conditions to the federal money. Why should provinces pay any more attention to the guidelines than they have previously?”

Equally serious is the governments’ silence regarding increasing private pay, and for-profit delivery. The federal government has not been enforcing the Canada Health Act, resulting in the increasing proliferation of private, pay-as-you go imaging and surgical facilities that allow patients who can pay to jump the queue.

“Where is the federal will to ensure national standards of universal access?” Dr. Dhalla asked. “With not a word from the federal government about maintaining equal health care irrespective of ability to pay, the deal does nothing to halt creeping privatization.”

“Roy Romanow’s report said that federal money must be used to buy change.” Dr. Guyatt concluded. This deal represents another federal give-away, with minimal progress toward serious health care reform.”

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