

Open Letter to Federal Health Minister Tony Clement

Hon. Tony Clement
Federal Minister of Health
Health Canada
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August 15, 2008

Dear Minister Clement,

We are writing to you regarding your upcoming remarks to the Canadian Medical Association's (CMA) annual meeting.

We urge you to use this important occasion as an opportunity to stand up for the country's publicly-funded health-care system.

We represent registered nurses in Ontario and they are well aware of the deep and abiding attachment citizens of this country have for our health-care system and its guiding principle of universality. They like it because of its basic fairness and because it makes good economic sense. However, Medicare is under threat in this country. The current president of the CMA, Dr. Brian Day is a vocal proponent of privatization of our publicly-funded system and the owner of a for-profit surgical facility in Vancouver.

When CMA members gather in Montreal next week, Dr. Day will pass the mantle to Dr. Robert Ouellet, another physician who owns a network of for-profit diagnostic clinics.

We know many physicians across the country are opposed to privatization but the CMA continues to advocate for measures that would inevitably lead to more for-profit delivery in surgical centres, hospitals and clinics, and ultimately dismantle Medicare.

Minister, on behalf of Ontario's nurses, we urge you and the Harper government to reject any measures that weaken Medicare and facilitate two-tier health care.

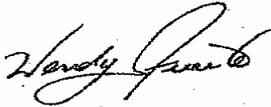
This country has built a system that provides all citizens with equal access to care and delivers high outcomes in a cost-effective way. This is good for patients and good for taxpayers.

To protect Medicare, its principles and spirit, you must strongly enforce the *Canada Health Act*. We also urge you to uphold Medicare by introducing policies that not only strengthen but expand our public health-care system. Let's increase access by developing a national, publicly-funded and controlled pharmacare program to cover the cost of essential drugs. Let's invest in health human resources, improved access to primary health care, continuing care, and true interdisciplinary work to solve wait times.

These are the solutions that will ensure our health-care system will be there for today and tomorrow's generations.

Minister, we trust that you will stand up on the side of the public, and will stand up for Medicare in your remarks to the CMA.

With warmest regards,



Wendy Fucile, RN, BScN, MPA, CHE
President
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, Ph.D(c), O.Ont
Executive Director
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

cc:

Prime Minister Stephen Harper
Dr. Brian Day, President, CMA
Dr. Robert Ouellet, President-elect, CMA