

Ontario Health Coalition

Urgent ACTION ALERT

March 22, 2011

Health Care is A Priority Issue for Canadians

We Need to Put Health Care On the Ballot this Election

With the federal government set to fall in the next few days, the country is moving into a federal election campaign. In this election issues pertaining to public health care are crucial.

We are asking our member groups and individuals to help distribute 100,000 leaflets door-to-door across Ontario during this election campaign. The colourful leaflets feature patient stories, a voter's check list and short highlights explaining the key health care issues with a focus on safeguarding and improving single-tier public Medicare. We will coordinate distribution in each area with the local health coalitions and our key member groups.

Will you or your organization distribute the leaflets in your area? An order form for the free leaflets is at the bottom of this notice. Please respond as soon as possible. We will confirm with you when we ship them. (They will be ready at the end of next week.)

Election Check List

Protect Patients by Protecting and Improving Public Health Care Means:

- ✓ **Renew federal funding in the Health Accord** The political party elected to form the next federal government will be responsible for negotiating the renewal of the Health Accord with the provinces and territories. This Accord contains the vital funding agreement for public health care across Canada. The Accord's renewal is coming up in 2014 and negotiations will begin in earnest next year. In 2004, the Paul Martin government negotiated the current 10-year Accord to put health care back on sound financial footing and reaffirm commitment to the principles that underlie our single-tier universal public health system after the damage caused by the draconian cuts of the mid-1990s. But the principles and the funding arrangement are at risk. Already Harper's finance minister has been openly speculating about withdrawing federal cash funding to the provinces for health care, opting instead for transferring tax points -- a move that would weaken our national medicare laws. Protecting the funding agreement in the Health Accord is priority number one for all of us who want to safeguard public health care for Canadians.
- ✓ **Safeguard single-tier health care and the principles of the Canada Health Act** Patients have come under increasing risk of high costs for health care as private clinics are expanding across Canada. The Harper government has failed to protect patients from two-tier health care, user fees and extra-billing introduced by these for-profit clinics and hospitals. Harper himself was the head of an organization opposed to public health care before he was elected. While encouraging provinces to "experiment" with privatization, his government has not acted even when we - and others - have provided evidence that the vast majority of private clinics are violating the Canada Health Act's prohibition against charging patients out-of-pocket for care that is supposed to be provided by public health care system. When governments have acted, they have shown that this type of for-profit privatization can be successfully rolled back. We need to stem the tide of privatization and build capacity in public non-profit hospitals and diagnostic and surgical clinics. Canadians need the federal government to act decisively to uphold the Canada Health Act and single-tier Medicare.
- ✓ **Bring in a national public drug plan** that will provide coverage for all Canadians and reduce the cost of drugs In the 2004 Accord our provincial, territorial and national governments agreed

to move forward with a national Pharmacare (public drug coverage) plan. Using bulk buying and other cost-control measures, this plan would reduce the cost of drugs and ensure Canadian patients' access to needed medications. The Harper government has stalled all progress on this issue. We need to put pressure on our local candidates to commit to this long overdue program.

- ✓ **Protect patients when they are moved out of hospital into long-term care and home care** As hospital beds are closed and patients are moved out of hospital, too many face user fees for needed care in home care and long-term care homes. The 2004 Health Accord fell far short of the mark on this issue. Providing subsidies for family members to stay home and provide care is not enough. We need a national strategy to establish public and non-profit home, long term, and palliative care for those with chronic illnesses and the elderly under the same principles as the Canada Health Act.
- ✓ **Protect public non-profit health care in upcoming trade negotiations** The federal government is currently negotiating an international trade agreement with Europe that could result in health care privatization. We need a clear promise that health care will be protected as a public non-profit service from multinational for-profit companies looking to cash in on public funding for health care in Canada.

ORDER FORM

Your Name and Organization (if applicable): _____

Your mailing address, city or town and postal code: _____

Number of leaflets you wish to order: _____

Where will you be distributing them? (street, town, local agencies, other): _____

Your telephone number(s) (please indicate daytime and/or evening): _____

Your email address: _____

Office use only:

_____ added to distribution list _____ items shipped _____ coordination with local coalition complete

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