

Ontario Health Coalition

UPDATE

Save Public Medicare! Information

First Ministers' Meeting Negotiation Update

As at Tuesday, September 14, Morning

Ontario Health Coalition & Ontario Federation of Labour

Yesterday the premiers and PM engaged in public posturing with prepared statements. McGuinty and the other premiers mainly sent the message that they want more money. McGuinty skipped over the question of whether or not there should be strings attached and he did not mention stopping privatization. (On which he ran the election campaign.) The federal government sent the message that they want a federal role with some national strings attached to funding. It was clear that all wanted to avoid a discussion of public vs. private healthcare delivery. Only Lorne Calvert of Saskatchewan spoke openly of supporting public healthcare delivery. (See CLC/CHC briefing note and open letter below)

This morning, ministers have mainly discussed waiting times. The morning press scrums featured premiers saying the federal offer for money is not enough. Romanow spoke on CBC saying the federal offer for money is enough. The difference is that the federal government is offering short-term funding at approx. 25% of public health expenditure. The provinces want federal funding (without strings), long term, at 25% of total (public and private) health expenditure. We support long term, stable funding, that escalates with population growth and inflation and other demographic factors, and we want to see homecare and other services covered. But critical to this is stopping privatization, enforcing the Canada Health Act, and expanding medicare to cover homecare and drugs as per our key messages in your briefing note.

Key problems that are emerging

- so far there is no discussion of stopping privatization... our message is that if Ontario does not stop privatizing our hospitals, clinics, homecare etc. we will never have enough money
- there is no discussion of clear national standards for programs s/a a national homecare program that includes supportive services for seniors and others
- so far, no discussion of drug cost control

- so far, no discussion of enforcement of Canada Health Act & strings.

They were supposed to discuss homecare & pharmaceutical strategy this morning after they discussed the waiting list issue but haven't yet. This afternoon, the agenda is supposed to be public health & prevention & promotion. It is not clear whether the items from this morning will be carried forward. Also there is some speculation that the premiers will table a counter-proposal.

We will send out more as we can. Our key messages as per the briefing kit still hold. Please go to <http://home.clc-clc.ca/media> for updates from the national media centre.

Briefing Note from National Organizations -- Monday Evening

On Tuesday morning, the participating groups at the Public Health Care Response Centre will take the action to the First Ministers and the media.

At the entry to the First Ministers' Conference, we'll be standing with plates (yes, paper plates) that say "Put Privatization on the Table".

After months of promising that our health care would remain public, the Prime Minister said nothing on Monday about stemming the tide of privatization in Canada.

Only one premier, Lorne Calvert from Saskatchewan, said privatization was an issue to be dealt with

We're waiting and watching to hear the First Ministers talk about privatization. We're disappointed that the Premiers did not address the most important issue of this meeting for those of us who want a sustainable health care system.

Here is an open letter that we will be giving the First Ministers tomorrow.

Open Letter to Prime Minister Martin and Federal Health Minister Dosanjh

Prime Minister Paul Martin was elected on a promise to fix health care for a generation. Before and during the election, he stated his opposition to for-profit health care. We expect the Prime Minister to follow through on his health care commitment and keep his promise.

We remember when the Prime Minister forced Pierre Pettigrew, then Federal Health Minister, to recant his statement that he "would allow provinces to experiment with medicare by hiring for-profit, private companies to deliver medical services within the publicly funded system." Instead, Mr. Pettigrew pledged to build a 'single-payer, publicly

administered and publicly delivered health system. Canadians expect Mr. Martin to honour that pledge.

We expect present Federal Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh to live up to the promise he made immediately after being sworn in as the federal health minister. Dosanjh said, "I can tell you that what we need to do is stem the tide of privatization in Canada and expand public delivery of health care so we have a stronger health care system for all Canadians."

If this historic First Ministers Meeting concludes without a plan to "stem the tide of privatization" - Canadians will have been betrayed and Medicare sabotaged. The deal forced on Canadians will be more federal funds in return for a federal 'blind eye' to commercial health care delivery. This is not good enough.

Medicare is sustainable, for-profit care is not. The federal government must secure the long term financial stability of Medicare by enforcing the criteria and conditions of the Canada Health Act. Federal funding must be conditional on using public funds for patient care, not for shareholder profits.

Public delivery is essential because the evidence demonstrates that not-for-profit health care delivery is safer, cheaper, respects Canadian values and is more accountable than private for profit, investor-owned health care delivery.

There is massive public support for the Canada Health Act principles - universality, accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness and public administration. According to a report by IBM Business Consulting Services, an astonishing 93% to 99% of Canadians polled annually over the last decade say the five principles are important.

The health system belongs to the people of Canada. We own it. We pay for it. It's not for governments' to give away.

Sincerely,

The participants in the Public Health Care Response Centre

Check out the webpage [Public Health Care Response Centre webpage](#) for analysis of the first day of meetings and pictures and videos from events in Ottawa.

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