

Ontario Health Coalition

LETTERS

September 8, 2000

The Right Hon. Jean Chretien
Office of the Prime Minister
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Re: First Ministers' Meeting Health Care Proposals

Dear Prime Minister,

The Ontario Health Coalition is comprised of over 100 organizations committed to the protection and extension of a quality public health care system. We are writing to call upon your government to use the First Ministers' Meeting on September 11 to work towards the establishment of an uncompromising federal government role in the setting of national standards for the administration and delivery of health care. Ontarians need you to take prompt and decisive action to deal with the alarmingly rapid privatization of health sectors, escalating out-of-pocket costs and two-tier Medicare.

We endorse and support the Canadian Health Coalition's proposals to you, including:

- a reinvestment of \$4.6 billion each year in federal transfers for health care.
- a guarantee that none of the restored transfer is invested in private health care delivery.
- new federal legislation to ensure health care remains universal, comprehensive, accessible, publicly administered and portable.
- a national initiative extending the principles of the Canada Health Act to cover home, long-term and community care.
- a national initiative to promote access to safe, affordable and appropriate prescription drugs.
- the prohibition of privatized, commercialized, US HMO-style primary care delivery
- a complete 'carve-out' for health and social services in all trade agreements negotiated by the federal government, including NAFTA.

In addition, we want to make it absolutely clear that Ontario Premier Mike Harris' standards are an utterly unacceptable alternative to real public accountability and protection of Medicare. This same provincial administration that would like to tout itself as an example for all of Canada has flowed public money to finance the building of long-term care facilities for private profit-making companies; has created severe staffing shortages, rationing of services, waste, and chaos in the home care sector; has cut

hospitals to the crisis-point; and has created conditions that promote burgeoning out-of-pocket costs and two-tier Medicare. The list of wrong, expensive and often contradictory policies and poor management could go on and on. It flies in the face of reason to propose that an administration such as Mike Harris' that is ideologically opposed to public administration of health care be the one which sets the mechanism by which public health care is to be protected. If your government is serious about being the guardian of Medicare you need to vigorously counter those premiers who are doing their utmost to privatize the system, rather than acquiescing to them.

We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our position that any further discussion on the future of Medicare must be democratized. Recent and upcoming provincial policy initiatives fundamentally attack the principles of Medicare without any public mandate to do so. If you are serious about public accountability, you need to immediately implement an open, transparent process through which meaningful public participation and debate can take place.

Your government has an opportunity and an obligation to work with the people of Canada on an issue that is close to all our hearts — to create a secure and sturdy, one-tier, publicly administered, publicly accountable health care system that covers the range of care from community and health care to institutional care. We urge you: make the most of this opportunity at this critical juncture.

Yours very truly,

Irene Harris	Daniel
Co-Chair	Benedict
	Co-Chair