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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CMA HAS MARGINALIZED ITSELF IN MEDICARE DEBATE, SAY CANADIAN DOCTORS

CHARLOTTETOWN –CMA delegates today defeated a motion which called on the CMA to reject parallel private health insurance as being inconsistent with the principle that access to healthcare should be based on need rather than ability to pay. As a result, the Canadian Medical Association has taken a view that places it at the extreme margins of the debate on the future of our publicly funded healthcare system, said representatives of Canadian Doctors for Medicare today.

“Sadly, the CMA has shown itself to be out of touch with the evidence, the values of Canadians, and we believe, with the views of its members,” said CDM Board Chair Dr. Danielle Martin, a family physician.

“The CMA leadership went to the trouble to prepare an evidence-based discussion paper called *It's About Access*”, said Martin. “That paper clearly states that international experience shows that parallel private insurance decreases access to healthcare for patients in the public system and does not improve efficiency or quality. Both Romanow and Kirby came to the same conclusion. Had delegates done their homework, they would never have defeated such a motion.”

Delegates at the Association meeting appeared to be taking views that contradicted each other in the extreme over the last several days. They repeatedly spoke of a commitment to the public system and passed motions they said were intended to strengthen and protect it – but they also passed motions that would undermine and erode it. This includes a motion calling for physicians to be able to practice in both the publicly and privately funded systems, yet the current prohibition on this practice in Canada and many other OECD countries forms the foundation of Canada’s publicly funded healthcare system. CMA delegates also defeated a motion rejecting parallel private insurance as solution to unreasonable wait times.

“Physicians are understandably frustrated with the challenges of day to day practice, but we have an obligation to always do the best we can for our patients, based on the best available evidence. This obligation also extends to health policy decision-making, something CMA delegates appear to have forgotten over the past two days”, added Martin.

“As members of the CMA, we call on our association to reconsider this series of actions, which undermine our profession’s reputation as a group that puts the interests of patients ahead of its own,” said Martin. “If doctors are to participate in the debate over the future of our healthcare system, we need to take positions that are consistent with the evidence

and that would lead to better health care for all our patients, not just a few. The delegates at this meeting failed to do so and the leadership of our profession needs to take a stand.”

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