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PHYSICIANS CALL ON THE CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND POLITICIANS TO SUPPORT PUBLIC HEALTH CARE IN THE INTERESTS OF ALL CANADIANS

Montreal – Doctors from across Canada today called on the Canadian Medical Association and politicians to support reforms to the health care system that focus on equity and quality rather than promoting private insurance and the creation of markets for buying and selling health care.

“We believe *all* Canadians should have access to a quality health care system based on need and not ability to pay,” said Dr. Danielle Martin, founding Chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM). “As CMA members, we are asking our leaders to propose solutions to health care challenges that will benefit all patients, not just those who can afford to buy private insurance, pay user and facility fees, and choose boutique medicine.”

The CMA begins its Annual Meeting tomorrow with health system reform prominent in the debate, including a new funding model for hospital services known as activity-based funding (ABF), which has been integrally linked to increased private for-profit delivery of health care in the United Kingdom. Outgoing CMA president Dr. Brian Day will be replaced by Dr. Robert Ouellet, a Quebec-based physician who has stated he believes in a greater role for private for profit delivery in health care.

“Today we are releasing our own discussion paper on activity-based funding,” said Dr. Martin. “We hope that by detailing the experience of other countries, our paper will help CMA delegates understand the real risks of ABF, including lower quality, reduced accessibility, reduced efficiency and higher costs; particularly where it is linked to increased private for profit delivery.”

The UK experience with ABF led the Chair of the British Medical Association to conclude just last month that the market has led to “competition not collaboration; fragmentation not continuity; inefficiency not efficiency,” and called for “an NHS untarnished by a market economy, true to its beginnings, giving the public a fair, caring, equitable and cost-effective health service. Not a service run like a shoddy supermarket war.”

Also today, prominent physicians from across Quebec released the *Montreal Declaration*, supported by CDM and its Quebec partner Médecins québécois pour le régime public (MQRP). The *Declaration* debunks the myth that system costs are spiraling out of control and shows why a shift from our publicly-funded system to private for profit

funding and delivery of healthcare would not improve sustainability, and would adversely affect system costs, efficiency, quality and accessibility.

“The solutions to wait times and other challenges in the healthcare system are at our fingertips,” said Dr. Simon Turcotte, a general surgery resident and founding member of MQRP.

“We have seen huge increases in the numbers of surgeries done in Quebec in the last year, all by improving service within the public system. We need to focus on these positive solutions rather than moving towards models of care that involve user and facility fees and private insurance that would benefit wealthy patients and their physicians at the expense of the majority - not a prescription the medical profession should stand behind.”

“I signed this declaration because I firmly believe that patient interests, not those of a small group of physicians and investors, should drive decision-making in healthcare,” said Georges Levesque, a Quebec emergency physician and well-known TV personality. “We are calling on elected officials within the CMA and governments to respond to the evidence, and to the real needs of Canadians, and promote reforms within the public health care system.”

For more information:

Jackie Smith 416-254-4610 cell

Charlotte Dussault (French) 514-585-3879 cell

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