

Media release

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**Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM)
call on health ministers of BC and Canada to review
private Vancouver ER
Vancouver hospital Emergency Rooms will be more crowded and patients will
have longer wait times while well-off residents pay to queue jump**

(Vancouver, BC. November 24, 2006) - - The 1,500 strong physicians' organization Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM) today call on federal Health Minister Tony Clement and BC Health Minister George Abbott to review False Creek Surgical Centre's proposal to establish a new private clinic beginning next Friday, December 1st in Vancouver BC.

"We understand that establishing a private for-profit urgent care facility never received formal approvals from the BC Health Ministry. Permitting this may lead to be more crowded ERs in local hospitals and longer wait times for the majority of patients, who cannot afford to pay the cost of False Creek's services," said CDM Chair, Dr. Danielle Martin, a family physician who works in rural Emergency Departments throughout northern Ontario.

Dr. Mark Godley, the centre's medical director and investor in Manitoba's Maples Surgical Centre has long been an advocate of two-tiered medicine.

"Private emergency facilities, where patients can pay for quicker access, not only violates fundamental principles of Medicare but will also siphon valuable health human resources (including nurses and emergency physicians) from the public system, where all patients receive care based on the severity of their problems and not on their incomes," added Martin. "In a system feeling the crunch of flu season and facing a critical physician shortage, why would a health minister want to see those resources redirected outside the public system?" she added.

Martin and BC physician members of CDM call today on both B.C. Health Minister Abbott and Federal Health Minister Clement to determine whether the proposed private emergency facility has obtained necessary regulatory approvals, and whether it would contravene provincial and federal legislation, including the Canada Health Act.

"If Vancouver patients face challenges accessing urgent care, governments should respond with solutions that benefit all patients," said CDM Board Member Dr. Robert Woollard, Head of the UBC Department of Family Practice. "We can start with increased investment in urgent care services and primary care reforms that would encourage improved collaboration between primary care physicians and their local urgent care services. This would be free up our ER time for true emergencies. However, allowing queue-jumping for a few wealthy people just isn't the answer."

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