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CMA FACES FUNDAMENTAL CHOICE, SAY CANADIAN DOCTORS FOR MEDICARE

Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM) welcomed Dr. Jack Burak as an alternative candidate to Dr. Brian Day in the election to become the next president of the CMA. The election will take place at the CMA annual meeting in Charlottetown from August 20 to 23.

CDM believes that Dr. Day, a privatization advocate who has argued for repealing the Canada Health Act, does not reflect the views of Canada's physicians. "Dr. Jack Burak offers a choice for CMA members who support Medicare", said CDM Board Chair and spokesperson, Dr. Danielle Martin.

"CMA needs a leader whose values are consistent with those of the Canadian public, and whose views are supported by the evidence", Martin added. "That's why Brian Day should not be elected the public face of Canada's 60,000 doctors."

In a multi-candidate election to select the British Columbia Medical Association's designate for CMA President, Day garnered more votes than other candidates. However, less than one-third of B.C.'s doctors cast a ballot, and even then, Day garnered only one-quarter of the votes cast.

While that makes Dr. Day B.C.'s nominee for CMA President, CMA rules also permit other candidates to run for President from the floor. However, last week, the British Columbia Medical Association threw its endorsement and resources behind Dr. Day.

"Canada's doctors deserve a real opportunity to democratically decide whether their next President should be someone who, like Dr. Day, wants to dismantle Medicare", observed Dr. Martin. "We believe the BCMA should respect the legitimacy of democratic debate over the CMA's future direction and leadership."

If elected, Dr. Burak would face challenges in bringing the CMA in line with the evidence and Canadian values supporting Medicare. In June, the CMA released a discussion paper outlining four options for Canada's health care future. But that document left out the best option: preserving our single-payer system and strengthening publicly funded care.

"Public funding is more equitable, more efficient, and boosts Canada's business competitiveness internationally," Martin concluded. "Canadians and their doctors need a CMA President who will provide unequivocal support for strengthening Medicare."

As the CMA annual meeting approaches, the Canadian Doctors For Medicare website (www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca) will be regularly updated to include backgrounders on key issues in the debate over the future of Canada's publicly funded health care system.

- 30 -

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