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BC and federal governments at odds with public on health care accessibility

Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM) and The Council of Canadians are concerned that the BC government is deeply out of sync with the public when it comes to health care accessibility.

This afternoon's release of the summary of input for the BC Conversation on Health shows BC residents want to preserve and strengthen the public health care system and ensure there is access to health care services regardless of where people live, or how much money they make.

"This is in direct contrast to the decision Health Minister George Abbott announced two days ago, when he was seemingly unaffected by the results of the Medical Services Commission investigation that sanctioned the Copeman Clinic. This clinic makes people pay thousands of dollars before they can see a doctor – it's clearly a barrier to access," said Carleen Pickard, BC Regional Organizer for the Council of Canadians.

CDM and the Council of Canadians are calling on the BC government release the entire report of the Medical Services Commission investigation into the controversial Copeman Clinic.

"Access to family physicians and primary health care is an issue for all citizens, but most patients cannot afford to pay the thousands of dollars charged by the Copeman clinic,' said Dr. Danielle Martin of Canadian Doctors for Medicare. "If the BC government has concluded, based on the report of the Medical Services Commission, that the Copeman clinic is not breaking the law by charging fees as a condition of gaining access to medical services, it has an obligation to release that report."

In today's press conference, Minister Abbott acknowledged the proliferation of private clinics in BC and spoke openly in favour of their expansion. He referred specifically to the Copeman Clinic, False Creek Surgical Centre and the Cambie Surgery Centre acknowledging that private surgeries and private health care delivery is growing in the province.

"BC residents were clear in the Conversation on Health that they want publicly-funded and publicly-delivered health care. The summary of The Conversation on Health reflects this," said Ms. Pickard. "The BC government should be reflecting the will of the people and shutting down private clinics."

With concerns raised about the legality of these clinics, it is long overdue for the federal government to get involved, says Guy Caron, Health Care Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.

"The federal government is responsible for enforcing the Canada Health Act, but has been silent on the proliferation of private clinics, not only in BC, but across the country," said Mr. Caron. "There is no leadership on the issue of privatization and these private clinics that charge people money to access services continue to operate unchecked. Where is the federal government on this issue?"

Canadian Doctors for Medicare and the Council of Canadians urge the BC government to immediately disclose the full contents of the review of the Copeman Clinic.

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