



Canadian Health Coalition
Coalition canadienne de la santé

2841 Riverside Dr., Ottawa, Ont. K1V 8X7

Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

May 7, 2009

Dear Mr. President:

As the national voice for Canadians who want to protect and expand our national public healthcare system, the Canadian Health Coalition would like to encourage your efforts to make health care available and affordable for all Americans.

Canada's national Medicare system is one that all Canadians value and depend on for quality care. Our goal as an organization is to ensure that this excellent system is expanded and protected for the benefit of all Canadians.

We are therefore very distressed by a television ad currently running in the United States that is sponsored by the Conservatives for Patients' Rights (CPR) and featuring the former president of the Canadian Medical Association, Dr. Brian Day. In this ad, Dr. Day purports to represent Canadians and Canadian physicians in criticizing our public health care system.

Mr. President, we urge you to listen to Canadians, and not to Dr. Day and those who want to introduce more private, for profit health services into Canada and the United States.

Dr. Day, whose private surgical clinic in British Columbia is currently under investigation by the B.C. government for illegal billing, does not represent the values of Canadians. As you know, Rick Scott, the sponsor of the CPR ads, is the discredited former owner of Columbia/HCA, one of the largest private health care companies in the world. In 1997, his board of directors removed him from office during the largest health care fraud scandal in the United States. The company was forced to pay \$1.7 billion in fines for overbilling state and federal government health plans.

Dr. Day and Rick Scott should not be allowed to speak for people who need and deserve quality health care.

Mr. President, we know that you are deeply concerned about the 46 million Americans who have no medical coverage. We're proud to say that Canada covers every Canadian citizen. Canadians live 3 years longer than Americans, and our infant mortality rate is 20% lower. Canada spends 10% of its GDP on health care, compared to 15.3% in the United States, yet we generally get more services. Economically, Canada's public health system dramatically reduces costs for business, particularly the hard-hit manufacturing sectors, because of higher prices and administrative costs in the primarily private U.S. system.

Canadians recognize our system can always be improved, but they overwhelmingly want public sector improvements, not for-profit private companies taking our scarce health care dollars. Our two countries need to stand together to strengthen public health care across the border and to protect the right to public health care from financially motivated doctors and insurance companies.

It remains shocking to us that Dr. Day, a past president of the CMA, is participating in a campaign to de-rail the efforts of the American people to secure their right to health care by misrepresenting the facts about Canada. This is a breach of fundamental ethical obligations of the medical profession, namely, a commitment to best evidence and avoidance of conflict of interest.

Canadians and Americans both need more public health care, not less. Private markets and commercial competition will make things worse, not better.

As Dr. Arnold Relman, Professor Emeritus at the Harvard Medical School testified before the Senate of Canada:


“The U. S. experience has shown that private markets and commercial competition have made things worse, not better, for our health care system. That could have been predicted, because health care is clearly a public concern and a personal right of all citizens. By its very nature, it is fundamentally different from most other goods and services distributed in commercial markets. Markets simply are not designed to deal effectively with the delivery of medical care - which is a social function that needs to be addressed in the public sector. ...

Many of us south of the border have always believed that you Canadians had the right idea in deciding that the financing of health care is primarily a public responsibility. We still think you are right and that we ought to emulate you, rather than vice versa.”

We wish you every success in your efforts to reform America’s health care system for the benefit of all your citizens.

If we can at any time share with you or your team the benefits of our excellent system, we would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Michael McBane
National Coordinator
Canadian Health Coalition
Ottawa, Canada
(613) 277-6295



www.medicare.ca