



Canadian Health Coalition
Coalition canadienne de la santé

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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Canada Health Act Annual Report:

Keeping Canadians in the Dark

Missing Information and Secret Tabling

OTTAWA - The Canadian Health Coalition today called on Federal Health Minister Clement to instruct his department to correct the serious deficiencies in the *Canada Health Act* Annual Report to Parliament for 2005-2006.

"Why was this important report tabled quietly on a Friday afternoon after Question Period with key information missing? Is federal health care spending exempt from accountability in the new Harper government? We were promised more accountability, not less," said Kathleen Connors, Chairperson of the Canadian Health Coalition.

Health Canada has reporting obligations to Parliament and must monitor and enforce the five criteria and the two conditions of the *Canada Health Act*. These obligations are not being performed. Key information is still missing. The Auditor General wrote in 2002, that Health Canada "is unable to tell Parliament the extent to which health care delivery in each province and territory complies with the criteria and conditions" of the Act (<http://www.healthcoalition.ca/ag.pdf>).

"The province with the greatest lack of reporting and accountability is also the province with the most dangerous plan to establish a parallel, for-profit health care system – Québec. The Charest government recently passed Bill 33, which opens the door to 2-tier health care and a major expansion of for-profit surgical clinics. The Québec Health Minister confirmed his government's plan to establish a 2-tier health system at a conference hosted by Health Minister Tony Clement in Toronto on Feb. 9th.

Health Canada's Annual Report consistently fails to identify, let alone assess, significant privatization initiatives underway in some of the larger, wealthier provinces.

"When key information - like data on for-profit delivery - is 'not available' (<http://www.healthcoalition.ca/not-available2005-06.pdf>) from provinces like Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, then federal health funding should become 'not available'", said Connors. "Canadian taxpayers expect to know how and where their health care money is being spent, especially in light of increased federal health transfers," added Ms. Connors.

Peer-reviewed evidence demonstrates that the proliferation of private investor-owned, for-profit clinics can threaten the integrity and viability of Medicare, thereby undermining the objectives of the *Canada Health Act*. In particular, two-tier access to medical services like MRI tests violate the legal requirement that universal access to publicly funded services be provided on uniform terms and conditions.

The Canadian Health Coalition has also called on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health to conduct hearings on Health Canada's lax approach to *Canada Health Act* reporting, monitoring, and enforcement.

Download the 2005-06 *Canada Health Act* Annual Report at:
<http://www.healthcoalition.ca/CHAreport.pdf>

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