



Friends of Medicare

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Supreme Court split on Medicare a challenge to the Citizens of Alberta

*Public system focused on health outcomes will not be
threatened by the privatization industry*

Edmonton – “The Supreme Court of Canada decision today in the Chaoulli case is a wake-up call to the citizens of Alberta,” said Harvey Voogd, Coordinator for Friends of Medicare. “We need to make sure that our province funds and delivers a public health care system focused on quality health outcomes. Such a health system will not be threatened by the privatization industry.”

In a ruling released today, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down a Quebec law banning private insurance for services covered under Medicare. The high court ruled that the law violates Quebec's charter of rights. It split on the implications for other provinces.

“Because of the Supreme Court split on the implications for the rest of Canada outside of Quebec, I have no doubt that there will be cases coming forward from privateers in other provinces,” said Voogd. “Pressure to strike down the rules of Medicare will come from health-care corporations that want new market opportunities.”

“The best defence against the coming privatization offence is to make sure our public health care system in Alberta is solidly funded and delivers quality health outcome,” said Voogd. “There will be no market in for-profit private health insurance or delivery if Medicare in Alberta has a cost-effective and quality delivered public health care system.”

“Thankfully the province has a template from its recent Symposium on Health,” said Voogd. “The majority of speakers cautioned that for-profit delivery is no cure for health issues like waiting lists. The message was that quality health outcomes must be the first focus of health reform. Further, the international experts stated that quality health reform should be based on the evidence.”

“Friends of Medicare is disappointed in the Supreme Court,” said Voogd, “because the court’s ruling flies in the face of poll after poll which has shown strong support from citizens for single-tier health care, with service based on need rather than ability to pay. Canadians strongly cherish the notion that we are all equal within our public health care system. With this ruling, the door is open to health care access depending on one’s financial resources.”

Friends of Medicare is a non-partisan, provincial organization that raises awareness of issues related to Medicare in Alberta and Canada.

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