

Vancouver Sun (January 10, 2006)

# Motive for private health care is profit

By Shirley Douglas

*"Of all the forms of injustice, inequality in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." - Martin Luther King, Jr.*

.....

The federal election has resulted in considerable debate about the future of universal health care. And that should be welcomed.

There is a lot of money to be made in breaking medicare. I believe this is the reason Dr. Brian Day is promoting private, for-profit clinics. He is bringing the U.S. model of investor-owned health care to Canada, and convincing people that this is the only way to remedy waiting times or other problems in our health care system. He knows this is not true.

Remember, every doctor who leaves the public system to work at Day's for-profit clinic makes waiting times longer. Expert research evidence shows this seriously compromises access to care in the public systems by taking badly needed surgeons, nurses and technicians out of the public hospitals.

Canadians are proud of and must fight to defend the core principle of medicare: Every man, woman and child should receive care based on need, not on their ability to pay. To ration health care based on ability to pay, rather than need, is a perversion of Canadian values.

I would invite Day to set up a not-for-profit clinic so that he could become part of the solution -- not the problem.

It's true that private, for-profit clinics exist in Canada. The question is not whether clinics like Day's will be allowed to operate, but whether our tax dollars will subsidize their profits.

Stephen Harper and the Conservatives say "yes," unequivocally. Paying private corporations to perform medically necessary procedures will somehow improve the delivery of public health care.

Paul Martin and the Liberals say -- as they always do at election time -- "no." But their record of neglect and broken health care promises speaks for itself.

Jack Layton and the NDP say "no" to private, for-profit health care. And they have backed that position up with action. In the House of Commons New Democrats have been the most outspoken and effective defenders of Canada's universal health care.

Day is resorting to spurious attacks on the NDP to legitimize weak arguments. The simple fact remains that he stands to reap tremendous profits -- paid by you.

Don't be fooled when they say it doesn't matter if it's public or private as long as it's covered by your health card. Remember who's paying the bill for your health care -- you are.

.....

*Shirley Douglas is the daughter of Tommy Douglas, the founder of Medicare.*