

News

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BC HEALTH COALITION

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Profit not the cure for future of Medicare

Concerned citizens get the facts at Vancouver Forum

VANCOUVER—Despite the heavy winds and rain, public health care supporters and concerned citizens packed a forum last night to discuss the politics of health care in BC and Canada.

The event was one of 33 stops on a cross-country series of town hall meetings called by the Canadian Health Coalition, with the goal of raising awareness of the threats Canada's Medicare system is facing from the growth of for-profit health services.

During the meeting, doctors, health experts and social activists discussed how the existing public system can be strengthened through public sector innovation.

"After three decades of working in the Canadian public system, as well as experiencing other countries' systems, I can tell you than none of the private 'solutions' proposed to fix health care will improve health outcomes," said Dr. Robert Woollard of Canadian Doctors for Medicare, and head of the Department of Family Practice at the UBC Faculty of Medicine.

"All across Canada, communities and health systems are successfully innovating within the public system in order to both shorten waiting times and enhance the quality of care given to those who need it most", said Woollard.

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Diana Gibson, Research Director for the Parkland Institute and Co-Author of "The Bottom Line, the Truth Behind Private Health Insurance" told the audience, "Private options will be more expensive, have worse health outcomes and can't solve wait times. We can afford not only to sustain but expand the public system, it is the cheapest and delivers the best health care".

People voiced concerns about the "facts" being promoted in the provincial government's "Conversation on Health".

Columnist Will McMartin told the crowd, "Carole Taylor says three quarters of the budget will be consumed by health care spending in the next ten years. This is simply untrue. There is no fiscal tsunami. Actual health spending as a percentage of the overall economy will continue to remain relatively constant".

Participants pledged to continue to pressure politicians to protect Medicare, to enforce the Canada Health Act to stop the growth of for-profit delivery, and instead use innovation to strengthen Medicare.

"There's a lot of misinformation out there, and privatization is not the answer", said British Columbia Health Coalition co-chair Alice Edge. "We want a discussion based on facts, not fear", she added.

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For information on tonight's health care Town Hall in Courtenay, please contact Ava Waxman, Council of Canadians at 604-688-8846.