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On eve of medical association's annual meeting: New poll shows overwhelming support for public health care; CMA president out of touch with most Canadians

OTTAWA, Aug. 12 /CNW Telbec/ - In a last ditch effort to convince Canadians that the public health care system should be privatized, Canadian Medical Association (CMA) President Robert Ouellet has promised to "pull out all the stops" during the association's annual meeting next week. Trouble is, Dr. Ouellet's mission to "lead the change" to privatization, is exactly the opposite of what 86% of Canadians want.

A new poll conducted by Nanos Research points to overwhelming support (86.2%) for strengthening public health care rather than expanding for-profit services. "With more than eight in ten Canadians supporting public solutions to make public healthcare stronger, there is compelling evidence that Canadians across all demographics would prefer a public over a for-profit healthcare system," said Nik Nanos, President of Nanos Research. Nanos Research was commissioned on behalf of the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) to conduct a random telephone survey of 1001 Canadians between April 25th and May 3rd. The margin of accuracy for a sample of 1,001 is +/-3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

As well, the federal government just released its report: Healthy Canadians - A Federal Report on Comparable Health Indicators 2008. Its findings identically mirrored the CHC polling results. In that report, a leading indicator pointed to the fact that, "Most Canadians (85.2%) aged 15 years and older reported being 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with the way overall health care services were provided, unchanged from 2005."

"Throughout our campaign, Canadians have told us they want to keep our health care system public and to improve it with made-in-Canada solutions. They also have told us they flat-out reject Dr. Ouellet's proposal to provide us with American-style two-tier medicine. This poll certainly underlines that for us. Eighty-six percent is a significant portion of the population," said Michael McBane, National Coordinator of the Canadian Health Coalition. "It is striking that Dr. Ouellet could be so out-of-touch with the pulse of most Canadians."

McBane warned that Dr. Ouellet's latest effort to replace public health care with a private system uses language that is misleading. "If imported into Canada, Ouellet's ideas about activity-based funding, 'competition' and more private delivery would not yield European-style care but instead would lead us down the road to US-style care. At the CMA's annual meeting later this month, you will hear Dr. Ouellet talk about 'patient-centered' care but he really means 'profit-centered' care. He will talk about transformative health care - which really means transforming a public system to one that is private. He will also unveil results of a CMA survey that he claims shows support for his new privatization scheme. In fact, the language used in the CMA survey was so vague and misleading that its results cannot possibly be interpreted as support for more for-profit medicine."

McBane said that Dr. Ouellet, who owns or manages 5 private, for-profit diagnostic clinics, has a history of misleading Canadians. Recently, the CMA president toured Canada touting the merits of what he called the European model of health care - cobbling together selective pieces of information from different European systems to lull Canadians into accepting the idea of more private, for-profit service.

"Dr. Ouellet needs to stop misleading Canadians and start telling them what he's really up to - privatizing our health care system," said McBane. "His 'transformational change' agenda is his last kick at the can before becoming the CMA's past-president. Dr. Ouellet's privatized, for-profit vision won't solve a single problem of our public health care - and more importantly, Canadians don't want it. And they've said this loud and clear."

The Canadian Health Coalition is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting and expanding Canada's public health system for the benefit of all Canadians.

For further information: Michael McBane, National Coordinator, Canadian Health Coalition, Tel.: , www.medicare.ca

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