

Albertans Look for a Better Way

In response to overwhelming input from Albertans, Friends of Medicare is launching an aggressive campaign to urge the government to cease and desist from further dismantling our public health structure in this province.

The overwhelming evidence from polling, letters and petitions is that Albertans want their public healthcare system improved, not dismantled. However, government actions in the past 12 months have consistently served to undermine the effectiveness and proper functioning of the public health system:

- Downloading the costs of healthcare onto seniors and families
- Cancellation and postponement of surgeries
- Broken promises on building and maintaining urgently required health facilities
- Proliferation of private health facilities
- Massive operating deficits
- Hiring and budget freeze
- Delisting of medically necessary services
- Confused and dangerous declarations such as “there is no more nursing shortage” and “public healthcare is no longer sustainable”

“Most Albertans now see the government is choosing the wrong way down a dangerous and destructive path,” says David Eggen, Executive Director of Friends of Medicare. “More health cuts inflict real damage to the health and security of the population. Certainly, there has to be a better way.” Friends of Medicare’s province-wide campaign will seek to galvanize public opinion with mediums such as billboards, publications, internet, social networking and other advertising, along with specific actions to apply pressure on government members.

“We have invested time and energy to build strong community action teams which have been building capacity and applying pressure in all corners of the province,” says Eggen. “It has been the work of these action teams where we have seen a lot of activity and even some degree of success.” Eggen points to the government retreating from their first senior’s pharmaceutical strategy in the face of overwhelming popular outcry, although Plan B is not much better and the pressure is still on to build a universal pharmacare plan.

Success of this campaign will be measured not just by how the government turns back from their dangerous and destructive “wrong way”, but by the degree to which they start to choose a “better way”. “There are so many examples of best practices from around the world that we could employ,” says Eggen. “Albertans can judge the government’s sincerity and commitment to true health care reform if they are willing to entertain ideas that actually strengthen and expand our public health system.”

The Friends of Medicare campaign is designed to act as a beacon to the many thousands of people who have been experiencing anxiety and concern over the government’s cuts to public health. “It gives Albertans hope to know we won’t just roll over and let the government pull our public health system out from under us,” says Eggen. “Mr. Stelmach would be wise not to underestimate how much Albertans understand the value of their public health system, and how hard they are willing to fight for it.”