



Tuesday » May  
22 » 2007

## Assault on medicare

The Leader-Post

*Saturday, May 19, 2007*

I think I was at the same conference reported on by your journalists in the May 4 and 5 Leader-Post. But I really wonder if they actually attended the conference or just based their stories on speakers' notes.

No mention that 600-plus people, an incredible mix of academics, activists, union members and politicians, attended a conference meant to build on the success of Medicare, not just "SOS Medicare", as was stated, but "SOS Medicare 2: Looking Forward".

The conference provided both information and a challenge to move into what T.C. Douglas called the next phase of Medicare. No mention of the standing ovations for Shirley Douglas, T.C.'s daughter, for Roy Romanow, for Robert Evans (Canada's pre-eminent health economist), for Allan Blakeney, former premier of Saskatchewan and for Monique Begin, the former federal minister of health who ensured passage of the Canada Health Act in 1984.

No mention of the context in which this conference took place: increasing privatization, a Canadian Medical Association trumpeting two-tier health services and Quebec's Chaoulli decision. No mention that the clearest outline of what the Chaoulli decision actually means was presented by Dr. Colleen Flood of the University of Toronto: an explanation that even legal bozos can understand.

There are serious threats to the universal system we have built up over the years, but there are also challenges and opportunities to enhance services.

Canada's health system has played an important role in equalizing a little of massive and increasing income disparities. Canadians do not need to declare bankruptcy in order to obtain health services.

But, as many of the speakers warned, we are under constant pressure from our southern neighbour and from the greed of some of our compatriots: there is a lot of money to be made in private care and in private insurance.

I think one problem with this kind of reporting is that fewer important conferences will be held in Regina. In Toronto, the conference would have been covered by the Globe, and at least some food for thought and context would have meant we read about the same conference that we attended.

Maija Kagis

Ottawa

© The Leader-Post (Regina) 2007

CLOSE WINDOW

---

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.