

February, 1983

Dear MRG Member:

This letter is a result of a joint meeting February 7th, 1983, of the MRG Provincial Steering Committee and the Economic Working Group of MRG. At that meeting it became clear that many Medical Reform Group of Ont. members may appreciate some more information regarding the upcoming presentation to Parliament on the proposed CANADA HEALTH ACT. A full description of the most recent draft of the ACT was given in the last POLITICAL letter. Further documentation on the ACT itself is available on request from our Executive Secretary, Howard Cash (416-292-1381). The purpose of this current letter is to outline more fully the urgent political situation surrounding the ACT at this time.

These are some of the questions that have come forward about the ACT from the MRG membership:

● WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ACT?

The legislation could have far-reaching consequences for the future of Medicare in Canada. The initial draft would have had the effect of giving Medicare increased legislative protection. However more recent drafts appear to offer much weaker protection for Medicare and more concessions to those who would privatize Medicare in Canada.

● WHY DOES THE MRG CARE?

The MRG, from its beginning, has stood for the preservation of Medicare. We have fought against the ever-present efforts of private health care interests to reduce the scope and funding of public health insurance in Canada. This is no time to stop fighting. Medicare is down and the referee is counting!

● WHY IS THERE URGENCY TO THE PRESENT SITUATION?

This ACT is not yet finalized. Like all draft legislation, it will be discussed in Cabinet prior to its final rewriting for Parliament. Cabinet Ministers are surprisingly sensitive to public opinion. They can be swayed and the ACT can perhaps be altered - i.e. strengthened - by effective lobbying now. The CMA and most Provincial Governments understand this only too well. They are expending vast resources to defeat or seriously weaken the ACT.

● WHAT DOES YOUR STEERING COMMITTEE PROPOSE TO DO?

Because of the urgency of the situation - Cabinet is to discuss the ACT within one month - action is needed now. The MRG Steering Committee will, among other actions, lend its support to a delegation being sent by the Ontario Health Coalition, of which MRG is a member. Direct lobbying of Cabinet Ministers and MPs is essential if we are to improve the ACT.

● HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The Steering Committee above all want you to know what actions are being taken. Further information letters will be sent to keep you abreast of developments as they occur. Your comments and criticisms are welcome.

Please phone Howard Cash (416-292-1381) if you have any concerns or wish more information.

In the next few weeks the Steering Committee would particularly appreciate if you would participate directly in this struggle by writing a few letters. The enclosed Letter Writing Kit is a useful guide. We hear by the grapevine that only 500 CMA members have written members of Parliament condemning the ACT wholesale. The MRG could almost match that!

In conclusion, we hope that this clarifies the urgent context in which your Steering Committee seeks your support.

MRG STEERING COMMITTEE

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FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN FURTHER DISCUSSION ON THE CANADA HEALTH ACT, THE NEXT MEETINGS OF BOTH THE TORONTO AND THE HAMILTON CHAPTERS OF MRG WILL BE DEALING WITH THESE ISSUES.

MEETINGS ARE:

TORONTO - FEBRUARY 22/83, 8:00 p.m.  
SOUTH RIVERDALE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE  
126 PAPE AVE., TORONTO

HAMILTON - FEBRUARY 22/83, 8:00 p.m.  
Place to be announced to Hamilton  
Members by mail.

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NOTICE OF MEETING

THE SPRING MEETING OF THE MEDICAL REFORM GROUP  
OF ONTARIO WILL BE HELD IN TORONTO:

FRIDAY, APRIL 22/83 - 7:00 P.M.

AND

SATURDAY, APRIL 23/83 - 10:00 A.M.

SOUTH RIVERDALE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE  
126 PAPE AVE., TORONTO

FRIDAY EVENING WILL HAVE AS ITS THEME THE MRG AND THE  
CANADA HEALTH ACT.

SATURDAY WILL INCLUDE AN MRG BUSINESS SESSION AND UPDATES  
ON VARIOUS TOPICS: ABORTION CLINIC, MINISTER OF HEALTH'S  
STATEMENT ON COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES, ETC., ETC.

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MEDICAL REFORM GROUP OF ONTARIO  
P.O. BOX 366, STATION "J"  
TORONTO, ONTARIO M4J 4Y8

LETTER WRITING KIT

RE: CANADA HEALTH ACT

DRAFT LETTER: a letter concerning the ACT should mention some of the specific points:

- THAT USER FEES (HOSPITAL FEES AND PHYSICIAN EXTRA-BILLING) SHOULD BE DECLARED CONTRARY TO THE INTENTS OF THE CANADA HEALTH ACT
- THAT ACCESSIBILITY TO INSURED SERVICES "ON UNIFORM TERMS AND CONDITIONS" BE GUARANTEED IN THE LEGISLATION
- THAT THE DEFINITION OF "COMPREHENSIVENESS" BE EXTENDED TO INCLUDE THOSE SERVICES WHICH PROMOTE, CONSERVE AND RESTORE HEALTH, PREVENT ILLNESS, INJURY AND DISABILITY, AND PROVIDE SUPPORTIVE CARE WHEN HEALTH IS DETERIORATING.
- THAT HEALTH MINISTERS AND PRACTITIONER ASSOCIATIONS EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE MECHANISMS TO ORGANIZE AND FINANCE PRACTITIONER SERVICES (AS OPPOSED TO FEE-FOR-SERVICE).

LETTERS and/or TELEGRAMS SHOULD BE SENT TO:

- HON. MONIQUE BEGIN, MINISTER, NATIONAL HEALTH & WELFARE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS, OTTAWA, ONT.
- HON. LARRY GROSSMAN, MINISTER OF HEALTH, 10th FL.  
HEPBURN BLOCK, 80 GROSVENOR ST., TORONTO
- YOUR FEDERAL MP (no stamp needed on the letter); or  
YOUR PROVINCIAL MPP.

(Please send a copy to the MRG)