



Canadian Health Coalition
Coalition canadienne de la santé

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Priority flu shots are for high-risk not high-income patients; government must act now on private clinics

OTTAWA — Flu shots given to patients at expensive private health clinics show why the federal Minister of Health must act now to stop the spread of private clinics, said Michael McBane, National Coordinator of the Canadian Health Coalition.

“Priority flu shots are meant for people at high risk, not those with high incomes,” said Mr. McBane. “It’s queue-jumping plain and simple. High-risk patients are lining up for a scarce supply of vaccine, while the shots are being handed out to private patients who can afford to pay \$3,900 for membership fees, or \$2,000 for a check-up.”

“It is unconscionable for our public health authorities to provide the vaccine for private patients while families are turned away from public clinics because of lack of vaccine. This is two-tier, Americanized health care,” said Mr. McBane.

Mr. McBane pointed out that private clinics that charge for medically necessary services have opened in several provinces. “This government has done nothing to stop these clinics, even though they extra-bill or charge ‘facility fees’ for their high-end services,” said Mr. McBane. In fact, the Harper government is actively encouraging provinces to ‘experiment’ with private for-profit clinics.

According to media reports, two private clinics - *Medcan* in Toronto and *Copeman Healthcare* in Vancouver - received a supply of vaccine for their patients. “These clinics require patients to pay a huge annual fee before they can access medically necessary services. They even describe their services as ‘executive’ and ‘elite’,” said Mr. McBane.

“This is a clear violation of the *Canada Health Act* which prohibits queue-jumping and financial barriers to medically necessary services. The Health Minister must stop washing her hands of responsibility and start performing her statutory duty to enforce the *Act*,” said Mr. McBane.

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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. It includes organizations representing seniors, women, churches, nurses, health care workers and anti-poverty activists from across Canada.

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