

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky
Minister, Alberta Health and Wellness
208 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Zwozdesky:

I am writing to express my concern about the recommendations of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health – specifically, the proposed changes to our health-care laws.

Alberta's legal framework for health care puts us on stable footing. Our current laws provide protections against U.S.-style private insurance, extra billing by doctors, two-tier health care and queue jumping, and private hospitals. We simply cannot afford to lose those protections to a set of vague and toothless “principles.” There are better ways to improve our health-care system.

It is noteworthy that these protections are not contained in the *Canada Health Act* – they are the responsibility of the provinces. And it is these laws that Alberta is proposing to change.

Scrapping our existing health care laws is a dangerous path for any health minister, given the way the Minister's Advisory Committee is proposing that the new law be written. The Advisory Committee has proposed that the new law put most of the details into regulation – structuring health-care laws as so-called “enabling legislation.” This would put an enormous amount of power in the hands of the Health Minister. Furthermore, it shields changes to the health-care system from public debate, as changes do not have to go before the Legislature. If the Advisory Committee's changes are accepted, private insurance, private hospitals, or two-tier health care can be brought in with the stroke of a pen, and behind closed doors.

If there are any certainties in Alberta politics, it is that Albertans care deeply about the future of their health-care system and want to see open and transparent processes in making changes that will benefit us all.

Minister Zwozdesky, I implore you not to tear up Alberta's health-care laws. There are many other innovations we can explore in order to strengthen the public system, such as pharmaceutical reforms, primary care reforms, and investing in prevention and promotion.

Sincerely,