



CAEP Sounds Alarm on Alberta's Shift Toward Privatized Healthcare

For Immediate Release

Ottawa, ON: November 21, 2025

The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP) is dismayed by the Alberta government's plan to introduce a hybrid public-private health care system. This plan will do nothing to alleviate the strain on emergency services, and will exacerbate already existing burdens on the public health care system and our ability to deliver timely emergency care.

CAEP's long-held position is that every Canadian should receive equitable treatment by the health care system, a position reflected in our proud tradition of public emergency departments (ED) that provide the same high quality care regardless of background or geography. What is being proposed in Alberta is contradictory to this fundamental belief, and privileges certain citizens based on their ability to pay for care. The experience in many jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom and Australia, shows consistently that the introduction of private care does not decrease wait times nor improve health outcomes, and - as demonstrated in [Mortality and health care privatization: A comparison between countries](#) - in fact worsens health outcomes. As a Canadian example, Quebec's experience with private medical clinics demonstrates that two-tiered systems diverts physician resources from public hospitals without reducing overall wait times. Research has shown that Quebec's emergency departments continue to face some of the longest wait times in Canada despite decades of parallel private care.

As has been well established in our [EM:POWER](#) report, ED wait times are a direct reflection of patient flow out of emergency departments, and reducing the number of physicians available for inpatient care can only increase delays for our vulnerable citizens in need of emergency care. To address overcrowding in EDs we must invest in hospital capacity, community care, and patient flow solutions, and not diverting limited human and financial resources from publicly funded hospitals into a parallel private system.

Private practices do not come with a bolstering of emergency services; when complications inevitably arise, these patients will be forced to seek care in Alberta's already overburdened EDs, exacerbating the already dire situation across the province.

This plan is not aligned with key guiding principles of the 'Quintuple Aim for Healthcare Improvement', including Improving Population Health, Reducing Costs, and Advancing Health Equity. This will not improve healthcare in Alberta. This will not make care more affordable. It will, however, make a two-tiered and unequal health care system for the province.



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CAEP stands strongly in support of bolstering our public health care system, ensuring that people from all walks of life can continue to receive the high quality, equitable care that is the fundamental principle of our great Canadian health care project.

About CAEP

As the national voice of emergency medicine (EM), CAEP provides continuing medical education, advocates on behalf of emergency physicians and their patients, supports research and strengthens the EM community. In co-operation with other specialties and committees, CAEP also plays a vital role in the development of national standards and clinical guidelines. CAEP keeps Canadian emergency physicians informed of developments in the clinical practice of EM and addresses political and societal changes, that affect the delivery of emergency health care.

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