



Nurses for Medicare
Les infirmières et infirmiers
pour l'assurance-maladie

24 September 2010

Letter to the Editor:

Re: Quebec's decision to not implement user fees for health services

As representatives of Nurses for Medicare, a grassroots initiative that promotes publicly-funded, not-for-profit health care in Canada, we applaud the Charest government for rethinking its idea of imposing a \$25 user fee for medical visits.

Not only would the user fee violate the principles of universality enshrined in the *Canada Health Act*, it would also have penalized the poorest and the sickest people in our society and widened health disparities in the province. Such a move would have acted as a disincentive for people to seek early treatment of medical conditions, which would simply have led to more intensive and costly interventions and hospitalizations down the road.

The benefits of early diagnosis and treatment are clear. Cost-conscious governments are better off making investments that improve access to primary care. Quebec has announced, for example, that it is going to create 500 new nurse practitioner positions by 2018, a move that should save the province money and improve health outcomes for many of its residents. We hope to see similar investments in the areas of health promotion and disease prevention. A long-term focus on keeping the population healthy, rather than simply treating the sick, is the key to building a truly sustainable medical system.

Sincerely,

Rachel Bard
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Nurses Association

Linda Silas
President
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions