



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE GASTROENTÉROLOGIE

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March 15, 2006

The Honourable Iris Evans
Minister of Health and Wellness
107 Legislative Building
10-800, 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Madam Minister,

The Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) was pleased to learn that the Government of Alberta has decided to tackle the problems experienced by many Albertans with access to health care. The reform you are undertaking will be guided by values such as patient-focused health care, delivery of quality health services, and timely and fair access to services - values that Canadian Gastroenterologists hold dearly.

In the past months, after a thorough study of wait times for digestive diseases across Canada, the CAG made the Canadian public and political stakeholders aware that patient access to care for patients with digestive diseases is unacceptable. The CAG also introduced 24 recommendations on medically-acceptable wait times for gastroenterology, to be considered as targets. These targets have been developed by a multidisciplinary group of 25 voting participants representing national and regional gastroenterology associations, general surgery, internal medicine and family practice and are based on public input and extensive literature review.

The CAG has done its' homework, is prepared with wait time targets, and has measured national and provincial current wait times. The CAG recently reported disturbing Alberta wait time data at our annual meeting (held in Alberta): 1 in 4 Canadians wait over 40 weeks before seeing a Gastroenterologist, and an alarming 1 in 4 Albertan patients with symptoms that are suggestive of serious disease, such as cancer, wait 16 weeks. These are only a few of the findings from our study - many others paint an unacceptable picture for patients with digestive disease.

The CAG respectfully requests an immediate meeting with you to initiate a collaborative process towards acceptable access to health care for your constituents with digestive disease. I will be calling you within the next few days to discuss this further and to decide upon the path forward.

Sincerely,

Paul Sinclair
Executive Director, CAG