



**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE GASTROENTÉROLOGIE**

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The Honourable George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for Ontario
Hepburn Block
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RE: Standing Committee on Estimates: Colon cancer screening program
< sent by email to CCU@moh.gov.on.ca, hard copy by mail >

Dear Mr. Smitherman,

I was recently forwarded the transcripts of the June 13th meeting of the Standing Committee on Estimates, where there was discussion of capacity issues surrounding a colon cancer screening program in the Province of Ontario.

As you know from our previous correspondence (May 9th, 2006), the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) is very supportive of such a program and applauds you for leading Canada in such an important initiative. Digestive disorders represent a substantial burden (equal to, or exceeding, that of many other therapeutic areas) to the Canadian health care system. We fully support your action on colon cancer screening. This is clearly an opportunity, in one area of digestive health, where action can have remarkable benefit through appropriate screening programs; ultimately saving many lives, and in the long-term reducing health care expenditure.

The CAG has been concerned about access to quality digestive healthcare for some time now. We have recently completed a substantial amount of work; 1) assessing current and future national human resources, 2) measuring national wait times for patients with digestive disease, and 3) establishing recommended wait time targets for patients with digestive disease. We are concerned about ALL patients with digestive disorders. However the above initiatives of course also include resources, wait times and targets in relation to colon cancer. We therefore have a considerable amount of expertise and data to offer as you move forward in this initiative. The CAG, as the National body representing Gastroenterology, must be directly involved in the planning and implementation stages of this initiative.

We look forward to the opportunity of assisting and working with you regarding this important initiative.

Yours sincerely,

William G. Paterson, M.D.
President

Encl: Paterson W et al. Canadian Consensus on Medically Acceptable Wait Times for Digestive Health Care. Can J Gastroenterol. 2006;20(6):411-423.