



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

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Attention News, Medical and Health Editors

For immediate distribution

**Canadian Gastroenterologists comment on Alberta's Third Way
Gastroenterologists are part of the solution in Alberta...
and elsewhere in Canada**

Calgary, March 16, 2006 - Everywhere in Canada, provincial health administrations are faced with tremendous problems with access to quality care and a patient care guarantee. These are not simple problems and there are no simple solutions.

One quick and easy solution has been to throw money at the problem. We now know that injecting money to buy new equipment only results in an increased demand for services and higher expectations from Canadians, but it has not solved the problem of access. The system must be viewed as a whole, and not in part. All stakeholders must be engaged toward a solution. We need a comprehensive approach involving political stakeholders and health care providers.

The approach introduced by the Alberta government is one approach. The Alberta Government has followed a logical and comprehensive approach involving public consultations (2005 Alberta Health Symposium). It has selected five values on which the Third Way is based: 1) patient-focused health care; 2) delivery of quality health services; 3) timely and fair access to services; 4) accountability for sound evidence-based investments, fiscal management and responsive service; 5) increased choice and control over one's own health and wellness. However, a project of such magnitude cannot be successful without the implication of all stakeholders, among which are the health care providers.

The Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) has already put in place the initial steps towards a solution. The CAG has set medically-acceptable wait time targets for patients with digestive disease. The CAG has completed an evaluation of human resources in Canada for digestive diseases. The CAG has measured current wait times across the country. Finally, the CAG is now looking at solutions to improve access to Gastroenterologists in Canada and to provide Canadians with a patient care guarantee. We demand that political stakeholders in Alberta take note of the serious problem with access for patients with digestive disease and work with the CAG towards a solution.

About the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology

The Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) was founded in 1962 to promote the study of the digestive tract in health and disease. The CAG is the national body representing Gastroenterology in Canada and has key links with international bodies. Recently, the CAG hosted the World Congress of Gastroenterology (September 2005) in Montreal. The Association is built on broad principles and includes individuals of different disciplines (gastroenterologists, surgeons, paediatricians, radiologists, basic scientists, nurses, nutritionists, health care ethicists). Today, the Association is comprised of over 1,200 members. CAG members are actively involved in research, education and patient care in all areas of digestive health and disease, contributing to the economic and social health of all Canadians.

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