

NewsRelease

FOR RELEASE: Saturday, September 16, 2006, 10 a.m.

ALBERTA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT WARNS: INVEST IN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM OR RISK ALBERTA ADVANTAGE

EDMONTON – Alberta needs to invest in its health care system or “the Alberta Advantage may be put at risk,” said Alberta Medical Association (AMA) President Dr. Tzu-Kuang (T.K.) Lee in his valedictory address today at the AMA’s annual general meeting.

Physicians are frustrated with the continuing lack of timely access to doctors and to care. “Our patients wait – in overcrowded emergency rooms, for referrals and consultations and for surgeries,” remarked Dr. Lee.

Alberta has an immediate shortage of over 1,000 physicians and this shortage is predicted to increase to 1,500 in less than five years. The government “needs to take immediate action and invest in Alberta’s health care system” that puts Patients First[®], Dr. Lee said. We need a health care system “for workers, their families and all Albertans.”

He explained that Alberta’s booming economy has set off an explosion in population, skyrocketing inflation and costs of living. All of this impacts the health care system.

“We want a well-funded public health care system for our patients and when that system fails, we want our patients to have options,” stated Dr. Lee. He noted that, 15 months after the landmark Chaoulli decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, Alberta is now facing its own, similar court challenge.

“It will be interesting to see how the government responds, especially in light of the varying health care positions of the Progressive Conservative leadership candidates, one of whom will be the next premier,” commented Dr. Lee.

Looking ahead, Dr. Lee delivered a message to the new Alberta premier, “Value your doctors and other health care professionals and recognize that doctors can help provide valuable input into how medical care is delivered to Albertans.”

Alberta Medical Association president warns: Invest in health care
22222

In another key theme of his valedictory, Dr. Lee reiterated the AMA's concern about the issue of pharmacist prescribing. He emphasized the association's belief that each profession has the right to determine its own scope of practise, but also pointed out that "with rights, come responsibilities and obligations, especially to the patient."

The AMA supports and appreciates the role of pharmacists in collaborative or team-based care. However, "proposals for pharmacist prescribing outside of the team environment still raise many questions," said Dr. Lee.

Such questions include how pharmacist prescribing would impact quality care and ensure patient safety. And, there still remains the issue of potential conflict of interest if pharmacists are allowed to dispense the drugs they prescribe.

Dr. G.N. (Gerry) Kiefer, a Calgary pediatric orthopedic surgeon, is being installed today as the 2006-07 Alberta Medical Association president. St. Albert family physician, Dr. Darryl D. LaBuick is the 2006-07 president-elect.

- 30 -

Patients First[®] is a registered trademark of the Alberta Medical Association.

For more information, or to request an interview, please contact:

Ronald A. Kustra, ABC
Assistant Executive Director
(Public Affairs)
Alberta Medical Association
C 780.990.4271

Shannon E. Rupnarain, MBA, ABC
Manager, Public Affairs
Alberta Medical Association
C 780.907.9003