



July 29, 2020
MEDIA RELEASE

ALBERTA DOCTORS OVERWHELMINGLY VOTE NON-CONFIDENCE IN MINISTER OF HEALTH

EDMONTON – 98% (97.83%) of Alberta’s physicians have lost confidence in Health Minister Tyler Shandro’s ability to manage the province’s health care system, according to a referendum conducted by the Alberta Medical Association (AMA).

The confidence vote referendum was conducted from July 21 to July 28, 2020, with the same rigour as a contract ratification vote. AMA members were invited to participate via a secure, one doctor-one vote, secret ballot voting platform. 8,934 physicians, resident physicians and medical students from across Alberta took part in the vote.

Commenting on the results, AMA President, Dr. Christine Molnar, said, “The message from Alberta’s doctors couldn’t be clearer; they don’t have confidence in this Minister, they don’t trust him. Over the past year, Mr. Shandro’s words and actions have created a chaotic state in health care and have alienated most of the people responsible for actually delivering the care in the system. It’s a toxic situation, and physicians have clearly had enough of it.”

The vote signals not only the frustration of Alberta’s doctors, but also their intention to try a different tack with the province by appealing to Premier Kenney to help resolve the impasse between Alberta Health and Alberta’s doctors. After informing its members about the outcome of the referendum vote, the AMA will be sending a letter to the Premier this week on the matter.

Dr. Molnar says, “Alberta’s physicians genuinely want to find a fair and reasonable resolution to move forward. Our objective remains a negotiated agreement. We understand the government’s desire to flatten spending and to implement new innovative approaches in health care, and we are committed to helping, but this will require a level of political leadership we haven’t seen so far.”

Physicians are extremely concerned about the scope of changes being unilaterally implemented by the provincial government. “Make no mistake, the Minister’s short-sighted changes will have profoundly negative consequences for medical practices and patient care across Alberta. The government’s goals are achievable, but they are best achieved by working collaboratively with physicians, rather than imposing changes that will not support a high-value health care system.

The latter requires strong physician leadership. Can you imagine if they took the same approach in responding to COVID-19 that this Minister is taking with the rest of the health care system – ignoring advice of medical experts, implementing unsound policies only to retract them when they clearly fail, and disseminating false and misleading information? It would be a disaster,” said Molnar.

The AMA will now be appealing to Premier Kenney to assist in finding an amicable way forward on this file. The AMA points out this is not intended to be an ultimatum, but rather a calling out for help from the Premier, which will benefit doctors and patients alike.

Dr. Molnar said, “We’re not demanding anyone’s firing or resignation, and we’re not presuming to tell the Premier what to do. We are simply going to point out the facts of the situation. Namely, that this issue has profound and long-lasting implications for Alberta’s health care system and the current relationship between physicians and the government, due largely to the Minister’s own actions and words, is a serious impediment. We are ready and willing to work with government to help meet their goals, but they need to be willing to work with us. Bottom line, we feel the Minister’s unilateral approach has been destructive and disruptive to the health care system and threatens patient care, and that just isn’t acceptable to doctors.”

The AMA maintains that given the current level of distrust and lack of confidence in the Minister of Health, the need for a new province-wide agreement with physicians couldn’t be more evident. Their continuing request of government over the past year has been to have a fair and reasonable negotiation that respects their rights to arbitration as essential workers.

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Background Information:

- Eligible physician, resident physician and medical student voters: 13,405
- Votes cast: 8,934
- Voter turnout: 66.6%
- Results:
 - I have confidence in the Minister of Health - 137 votes (1.53%)
 - I do not have confidence in the Minister of Health - 8,740 votes (97.83%)
 - I must abstain - 57 votes (0.64%)

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