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Tuesday, July 29, 2008

## Editorials

Posted on Tuesday, July 29, 2008

### Canadian Health Care Proves House of Cards

Even the Canadians have given up on defending their government-run health care system, at least in its present form. But that hasn't stopped American politicians from seeking to emulate it, the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Kalese Hammonds says.



"Claude Castonguay, the mastermind behind the government-run program, admits that something has to change," Ms. Hammonds reports. "Notorious for lengthy waiting lines and rationed health care, the system has crumbled under the management of its federal government."

For years, Canadians have come to the United States for treatment that their own system had denied or delayed — and now the Canadian provinces are starting to pay for some services delivered here.

"Canada's perfect storm has been created by policies that allow the government to set reimbursement rates for health care providers, and require health services to be rendered regardless of an individual's ability to provide additional co-payment," Ms. Hammonds says. "As a result, physicians are in short supply and patients wait months for services. At any given time, up to 800,000 Canadians are on a physician's waiting list."

The same thing is seen in Canadian hospitals.

"Similar public financing tactics with hospitals have lead to health care rationing and limited access to services," Ms. Hammonds says. "The Canadian government gives hospitals a pre-determined amount to cover the costs of providing health care, forcing them to limit their services in order to operate within



budget."

The United States has so far resisted a Canadian-style system — with the result being that Canadians come here.

"But the threat of an equally disastrous system taking over our nation's health care is very real," Ms. Hammonds contends. "Sen. Barack Obama's proposal for reducing the financial burden on Americans sets us up to follow down the path toward a national health care system. Creating income-related subsidies for individuals buying a newly developed public plan would drastically increase the government's role in health care and increase the number of people on the government's tab, while forcing providers to rely even more heavily on government reimbursements for their income."

Obama has estimated his plan will cost \$65 billion per year. But that's sure to be below the real cost.

"When Medicare was created in 1966, a 'conservative' projection had it growing to \$12 billion by 1990," Ms. Hammonds points out. "Actual 1990 spending was nine times higher. Under Obama's health plan, Americans will see their tax burdens spiral ever higher unless we also begin rationing health care and limiting services."

There's a better way to fix our health care woes.

"A wiser approach would give consumers greater control of how they spend their health care dollars," Ms. Hammonds says. "Reducing health insurance mandates, allowing individuals to purchase health insurance in other states, and shifting the federal tax incentive from employers to individuals would make health insurance

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*Philippians 3:14*

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