



CANADIAN DOCTORS
FOR MEDICARE

MÉDECINS CANADIENS
POUR LE
RÉGIME PUBLIC

20
YEARS

Better Medicare Health Summit

One look back, **twenty** leaps forward



March 27, 2026

9 am to 5 pm



58 Cecil St, Toronto, ON M5T 1N6
Cecil Community Centre, Toronto, ON

Defending and Rebuilding Canada's Public Health Care System

Welcome to the 2026 Better Medicare Health Summit and 20th Anniversary Celebration! Even as public health care faces major threats in 2026, I believe it is worthwhile to review our history and celebrate success. Canadian Doctors for Medicare was founded in 2006 by Dr. Danielle Martin. Twenty years later, I am grateful to say that we have truly impacted health policy in Canada and created a community of physicians and allies who believe a better health system is possible.

Between a global pandemic and economic crises, this organization has endured near-constant existential threats. But we haven't just weathered the storm – we have conquered it. Canadian Doctors for Medicare contributed immensely to the success of the Cambie Surgeries Corporation trial. We helped to revive the Canada Health Act Interpretation Letter that will allow patients to access publicly-funded Nurse Practitioner care. We contributed to the Canadian Medical Association's national consultation on private-public care and were thrilled with their updated policy. We have seen the rollout of the Canada Dental Care Plan and passage of the Pharmacare Act. These programs are far from perfect – but we have been able to keep these conversations in the political and public consciousness, and that's the first step to achieving our true vision for Better Medicare.

Despite our progress, the health system is struggling. Torturous wait times and understaffing threaten the health and safety of Canadians. And the proposed “solutions” – like Alberta's Health Statutes Amendment Act or private-pay virtual care – are posed to exacerbate these pervasive problems.

Rest assured that Canadian Doctors for Medicare will keep fighting for the next 20 years and beyond. With your support, we hope to highlight real, evidence-based solutions for Better Medicare. Team-based primary care. Centralized referral systems. Public investment in preventative care and Pharmacare. We know that we face an uphill battle. But we have already beaten the odds. Past-Chairs like Dr. Danielle Martin, Dr. Monika Dutt, and Dr. Danyaal Raza; and a cadre of Board Directors, members, and supporters have positioned us for success. Each of us now has the opportunity to continue this momentum and build a system based on our shared vision: “A high-quality, equitable, sustainable health system built on the best available evidence is the highest expression of Canadians caring for one another”.

Dr. Melanie Bechard
Chair, Canadian Doctors for Medicare





Program

Opening Keynote: Riding the Rollercoaster: Ups and Downs on the Road to Better Medicare

Canadian Doctors for Medicare entered the national health care debate in 2006, when a group of physicians and allies grew concerned about increasing privatization in Canadian health care and the emergence of a two tier system that would allow the wealthy to purchase private insurance and private care at the expense of the vast majority of Canadians.

While we have successfully fended off the most significant attack on Medicare through the Cambie Trial, the challenges of ensuring equitable access to high quality public health care continue to grow.

How do we stop the emergence of a two tier system that brings American style health care to Canada? Is it possible to confront powerful industries seeking to put health care on the market? Can public health care solutions become the standard for addressing wait times and improving access?

Dr. Melanie Bechard will take us through the steep challenges that are ahead on the road to Better Medicare. She will be joined in conversation by special guest the **Honorable Dr. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler**.

Panel: Why aren't we measuring up? Transforming Canada's primary care system through scalable innovations

We have heard about many innovative public health care solutions to address Canada's primary care crisis, and while we have seen some improvements, the system remains deeply strained as 5.9 million people are still without a family doctor. According to the latest 2025 OurCare Report, access to high-quality primary care depends on where you live, with significant variation across provinces and territories.

This raises several important questions: Why do some regions perform better than others? What has led to more people having access to family doctors in 2025 compared to 2022? How can we ensure primary care clinics are accountable to the communities they serve? Which policies are improving access, and how can we scale these innovative public solutions while pushing back against the growth of for-profit care?

Dr. Tara Kiran, Dr Rebecca Hicks, Dr Margot Burnell and **Dr. Monika Dutt** will discuss public solutions that are already working across the country but remain siloed across jurisdictions, the policies needed to scale them, and how to chart a path toward national implementation. Moderated by **Dr. Francine Lemire**.



Program

Debate: This house supports the nationalization of Canada's universal publicly-funded health care system

Would a nationally delivered system similar to the National Health Service (NHS) in England provide a more efficient and accessible health care system in Canada?

Join us at the Better Medicare Health Summit for a head-to-head debate on one of the most provocative ideas in Canadian policy: the full nationalization of our health care system.

The motion: This House supports the nationalization of Canada's universal, publicly funded health care system.

Speaking in favour of the motion will be **Dr. Danyaal Raza** and **Dr. Hasan Sheikh**. Speaking against the motion will be **Dr. Ashley Miller** and **Dr. Melanie Bechard**. **Dr. Henry Annan** will serve as moderator.

Panel: Canada Health Act

Passed in 1984, the Canada Health Act (CHA) is landmark legislation that ensures medically necessary care is covered under provincial and territorial health plans. More than four decades later, it continues to safeguard and sustain Canada's universal public health care system.

How can we continue to use the CHA to defend and strengthen public health care today? What are the strengths and limitations of its five principles? How are potential violations identified, investigated, and addressed? And what current and emerging challenges does the CHA face?

We are thrilled to welcome **Jennifer Goodyer** and **Alex Russell** from the **Canada Health Act Division at Health Canada** for a presentation and discussion - moderated by CDM Board Member Dr. Edward Xie.

At the beginning of last year, we saw a major victory for public health care with the long-anticipated release of the CHA Interpretation Letter. With your support, we succeeded in bringing more health care professionals, such as Nurse Practitioners, into the public system and eliminating patient charges. Are we still on track for this new policy to be implemented by April 2026? Join us to discuss the future of the CHA as well as strategies to raise awareness and strengthen enforcement.



CANADIAN DOCTORS
FOR MEDICARE | MÉDECINS CANADIENS
RÉGIME PUBLIC

20
YEARS



Program

Closing Keynote: Does the canary still have a pulse? Finding solutions to Canada's ED overcrowding crisis

Across the country, emergency departments are reaching a breaking point — with repeated closures, exhausted health care workers, and tragic stories of patients waiting hours, sometimes with fatal consequences, before receiving care.

Wait times are a health care system's vital sign. Much like high blood pressure or a rapid heart rate signals distress in the human body, skyrocketing wait times for emergency care signal that our health system is under severe strain.

Everyone is frustrated with the growing wait times and the overcrowding crisis in Emergency Departments across the country. The situation has become deeply alarming.

Dr. Howard Ovens, Medical Lead of the Provincial Program in Emergency Services at Ontario Health, will walk us through the current state of emergency departments in Canada and outline the steps needed to reform emergency care so Canadians can rely on it when they need it most.

We are pleased to acknowledge the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) for their sponsorship of the 2026 Better Medicare Health Summit

ASSOCIATION
MÉDICALE
CANADIENNE



CANADIAN
MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION

The Canadian Medical Association is a national movement of physicians advocating for a better future of health care. Read more here: cma.ca/our-focus



**BETTER MEDICARE
HEALTH SUMMIT**



Schedule

Better Medicare Health Summit

8-9 AM	Registration
9 - 9:15 AM	Welcome - Celebrating 20 years
9:15 - 10:15 AM	Riding the Rollercoaster: Ups and Downs on the Road to Better Medicare Keynote address by Dr. Melanie Bechard and special guest Dr. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler
10:15 - 10:25 AM	Connect Over Coffee
10:30 - 11:45 AM	Panel: Why aren't we measuring up? Transforming Canada's primary care system through scalable innovations Moderated by Dr. Francine Lemire
	Lunch
12:45 - 1:45 PM	Networking: Organizing for Better Medicare
1:50 - 2:50 PM	Debate: This house supports the nationalization of Canada's universal publicly-funded health care system Moderated by Dr. Henry Annan
3 - 4 PM	Panel: A Presentation by the Canada Health Act Division, Health Canada Moderated by Dr. Edward Xie
4:10 - 5 PM	Does the canary still have a pulse? Finding solutions to Canada's ED Overcrowding crisis Keynote address by Dr. Howard Ovens

Sponsored by



Speakers



Dr. Melanie Bechard is a pediatric emergency physician, Assistant Professor at the University of Ottawa, and the current Chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare. Dr. Bechard completed medical school at the University of Toronto, pediatrics residency at the Hospital for Sick Children, and pediatric emergency fellowship at CHEO. In 2021, she completed her Master of Public Health Degree with a concentration in Health Systems and Policy at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health as both a Sommer scholar and Fulbright scholar. Over the past twelve years, Dr. Bechard has had an unbroken run serving on the Board of Directors of several medical organizations, including the Canadian Federation of Medical Students, the Professional Association of Residents of Ontario, Resident Doctors of Canada, the Federation of Medical Women of Canada, and the Canadian Medical Association. Dr. Bechard is the current Research Director of the University of Ottawa pediatrics residency program; her own growing research program focuses on equitable access to care, particularly in the pediatric emergency context.

When she's not in the emergency department or causing good trouble on Parliament Hill, you can find Dr. Bechard biking around Ottawa (yes, even in the winter), teaching indoor cycling classes at Where I Thrive studio, traveling somewhere cold and wet with her radiation oncologist husband, or caring for her four chinchillas.



Honourable Dr. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler was appointed to the Senate of Canada on September 26, 2022.

Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler is an internationally renowned surgeon and a dedicated advocate for health and health care. Born and raised in Winnipeg to immigrant parents from the Philippines and India, she completed her medical school and residency training in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Manitoba. She then did further subspecialty training at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. Dr. Osler holds a Graduate Certificate in Global Surgical Care from the University of British Columbia and has completed the Director's Education Program from the Institute of Corporate Directors and the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto.

Senator Osler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Manitoba and was the Head of the Section or Otolaryngology-Head and Neck at St. Boniface Hospital in Winnipeg from 2010 to 2019. In 2018, she became the first female surgeon and the first racialized woman elected as President of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA). While at the CMA she championed principles of equity, diversity and inclusion within medicine and led the development of the CMA's first ever policy on equity and diversity. Senator Osler has held leadership roles with the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, was the 2021-22 President of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada, the 2022-22 Chair of the Canadian Medical Forum, and Co-Chair of the Virtual Care Task Force from 2019-2022.

She is the recipient of numerous honours and awards.

Senator Osler currently sits on the Standing Committee of Social Affairs, Science and Technology.

Speakers



Originally from Montreal, **Dr. Francine Lemire** is a graduate of McGill and Memorial University of Newfoundland. Francine worked as a comprehensive family doctor in Corner Brook NL for 23 years, before taking on leadership roles at the College of Family Physicians of Canada for 20 years, as CEO for the last 9 ½ years of that time period. Now retired from active practice, she aims to good citizenship by serving on boards of not for profit organizations dedicated to improving standards of education, and strengthen health and health care. She became a member of the Order of Canada in December 2023.

She is married, has three stepchildren and three grandchildren. She loves cross country skiing, swimming and canoeing, and is a past Paralympian.



Currently president of the Canadian Medical Association, **Dr. Margot Burnell** is a medical oncologist who has served the patients of New Brunswick for over three decades. She is an associate professor of medicine at Dalhousie University and was the head of the department of oncology for eight years. She also previously served as chief of staff for Zone 2 of the Horizon Health Network in the province.

She has participated in and chaired multiple committees associated with the health authority, the Saint John and New Brunswick medical societies, CMA, pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review and Hospice Greater Saint John. She has participated in many clinical trials. She is co-chair of the supportive care committee for the Canadian Cancer Trials Group.

Dr. Burnell has dedicated herself to caring for patients, making a difference in their lives, helping them on an individual basis, participating in system administration and now advancing solutions to patient and physician concerns at decision-making tables.

She feels being a physician is a calling, is eager to share her passion for medicine with coworkers and learners, and believes in giving back to her community to make it a stronger, healthier one.



Dr. Tara Kiran is a family physician and a health systems researcher with nationally and internationally recognized expertise in primary care policy, quality improvement, and health system evaluation. She holds the Fidani Chair in Improvement and Innovation at the University of Toronto where she also serves as Vice Chair, Quality and Innovation for the Department of Family and Community Medicine.

Dr. Kiran's research focuses on understanding and addressing gaps in access, equity, and quality in primary care, with recent work examining shifts in the physician workforce, the impact of team-based care, and public priorities for reform. Dr. Kiran is the founder and national lead of OurCare, Canada's largest public engagement initiative on the future of primary care, which has shaped policy direction in multiple provinces and informed Ontario's Primary Care Act. She also hosts Primary Focus, a podcast that explores innovative primary systems and clinics—in Canada and around the world. She practices family medicine at St. Michael's Hospital, Unity Health Toronto where she is also a Scientist at the MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions. Throughout her work, she is motivated by a deep commitment to improving access to high-quality, equitable, and patient-centred care.

#BetterMedicare

Speakers



Dr. Rebecca Hicks is a community-based family physician practicing comprehensive family medicine in Toronto, ON. In addition to advocating for her patients, she has advocated for family doctors across Ontario as a member of the Section on General and Family Practice Executive at the Ontario Medical Association. Her current role is president-elect of the Ontario Medical Association. She is on this panel as a family physician in the community to provide a front-line lens to the challenges primary care faces.



Dr. Monika Dutt is a Family Physician and specialist in Public Health and Preventive Medicine. She is a PhD Candidate in Health Policy at McMaster University and a union subgroup President with the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada. She has worked as a Medical Officer of Health and in primary care in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Saskatchewan. She is the daughter of immigrants from India and lives in Sydney, NS, with her fourteen-year-old son.



Dr. Henry Annan is a paediatric emergency physician at IWK Health and an assistant professor at Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine. He also serves on the board of Canadian Doctors of Medicare. He has interests in global health, public policy and how medical education can be used to advance these competencies in medical learners.



Dr. Danyaal Raza is a family physician with Unity Health Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital, and an Assistant Professor with the University of Toronto. He is the inaugural Primary Care & Health Policy Scholar at St. Michael's Department of Family & Community Medicine. Dr. Raza also serves as Board Chair of the St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team, as Knowledge Translation Lead of the Health Tech and Society Lab based at Women's College Research Institute, and on the Board of Directors of the Atkinson Foundation. He is also past Chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare.



Dr. Ashley Miller is an academic general internist, virtual care advocate, and passionate champion for digitally-enabled health care transformation. After graduating from medical school at University of Ottawa, she completed her residency in Internal Medicine and General Internal Medicine at Memorial University. She also holds a Masters of Science in Health Policy, Planning and Financing from the London School of Economics and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Ashley is an Associate Professor in Dalhousie University's Department of Medicine. She enjoys a parttime academic role and clinical practice in diverse settings in addition to her role as Chief Medical Information Officer for IWK Health and Nova Scotia Health. As CMIO, she is championing digital transformation across Nova Scotia, including as a clinical leader of the One Person One Record (OPOR) initiative. She is a longstanding CDM member and former board member who firmly believes that preservation of our publicly funded health care system will depend on the adoption of emerging technologies and innovations and the evolution of health systems to accommodate the rapid pace of change in this space.



Dr. Hasan Sheikh is an emergency and addiction medicine physician in Toronto and an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto Department of Family and Community Medicine. He holds a Master's in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and was a previous board member and Vice-Chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare.

Speakers



Dr. Edward Xie works as an emergency physician, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto, and a Director of Canadian Doctors for Medicare. He has interests in well-being societies, planetary health, and pharmacare. He is part of the leadership of the Collaborative Centre for Climate, Health and Sustainable Care at the University of Toronto and a PhD candidate in Health Systems Research, supported by a CIHR doctoral award.



Jennifer Goodyer has over 20 years at Health Canada in various roles, including as a Senior Policy Analyst in the Federal Provincial Territorial Relations Division, as Special Advisor to the Strategic Policy Branch Assistant Deputy Minister, and as Director for the Communication and Public Affairs Branch Assistant Deputy Minister's Office. She joined the Canada Health Act Division in 2015 as the Assistant Director for Compliance and Interpretation, leading the team responsible for the extra-billing and user charges reporting, the production of the Canada Health Act Annual Report, the CHA Reimbursement Policy, and also the team with the federal policy lead on the BC Charter challenge (Cambie case). In 2022, she stepped into the Executive Director role for the Canada Health Act Division, leading efforts on implementing the CHA's Diagnostic Services Policy as well as the new CHA Services Policy interpretation letter



Alex Russell, a graduate of Carleton University's School of Public Policy and Administration, first joined the Canada Health Act Division in 2017 as a co-op student. As a Senior Policy Analyst in the Division's Compliance and Interpretation Unit, Alex has led work on a variety of files including the administration of the Diagnostic Services Policy, Canada Health Act compliance in Ontario, and privatization in the health care system. In 2022, he worked with Health Canada's Dental Care Taskforce, helping to create the Canada Dental Benefit, a precursor to the Canadian Dental Care Plan. Alex chairs the Eligibility and Portability Agreement Working Group, a table of federal-provincial-territorial officials working to uphold the Eligibility and Portability Agreement, a set of guidelines on eligibility and portability for provincial and territorial health insurance coverage of insured health services, as defined under the Canada Health Act. In his free time, Alex enjoys good (and bad) movies, fishing, and spending time with family and friends.



Dr. Howard Ovens is a staff emergency physician and the Chief Medical Strategy Officer of Sinai Health, and Medical Advisor to Sinai Health Foundation. At the University of Toronto, he holds the rank of Full Professor at the Dept. of Family and Community Medicine and is a Senior Fellow in the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation. He is the Medical Lead of the Provincial Program in Emergency Services at Ontario Health. He is also a member of the Public Affairs Committee of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians; he tweets about issues in the administration of and public policy related to emergency services using the handle @HowardOvens and his blog "Waiting to be seen" is hosted on the Emergency Medicine Cases website.



CANADIAN DOCTORS | MÉDECINS CANADIENS
FOR MEDICARE | RÉGIME PUBLIC

20
YEARS



**BETTER MEDICARE
HEALTH SUMMIT**

