

The Politics of Canadian Health Care in a New Conservative Era

Friday, July 21, 2006 – Mix together politics and health care, and you get a recipe for interest no matter where you live. In June, the Director of CPRN's Health Network took Canada's story of politics and health to the 5th Annual Symposium of the International Network for Health Policy and Reform, in Helsinki, Finland. Tom McIntosh joined speakers from Poland and the Netherlands to explain how significant political shifts in all three countries is affecting the future of health reform.

In his presentation, "**The Politics of Canadian Health Care in a New Conservative Era**" McIntosh described for his international audience how Stephen Harper's new government is tightly focussed on its "Five Priorities." He explained how the health priority – Care Guarantees – would mean formal recourse for citizens experiencing long waits for certain health services (which may include private delivery or travel to available service elsewhere). He also reported to his audience how that intense focus has meant the federal health agenda is now consumed by the idea of the Care Guarantees. As you'll see in his presentation, McIntosh emphasized the political challenges facing the new government both internally and externally in developing a successful version of this priority.

McIntosh's presentation set the scene for a later discussion about the importance for health economists (the majority of the conference attendees) to pay attention to politics and to not treat politics as simply an external element that is irrelevant to their analysis. In other words, ignore politics at your peril. That discussion was led by Theodore Marmor, professor of Public Policy and Management at Yale University. Marmor was a witness in the Supreme Court of Canada case about private insurance for publicly insured services (*Chaoulli v. the Queen*).

To access or download a copy of McIntosh's presentation, [click here](#).

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