

June 30, 2003

Dr. Ian Green
Deputy Minister of Health
Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9

Facsimile: 957-0212 (2 pages)

Re: Composition of Health Council

Dear Dr. Green:

The Canadian Association of Optometrists is the National Association for Optometrists in Canada. We represent all provincial Optometrists Associations for the profession across Canada.

As you may know, optometrists provide most of the primary eye care in Canada (approximately 80%). Clearly, a majority of Canadians rely on optometrists for all their primary eye care needs.

The Health Accord speaks to the importance of primary care providers outside the hospital setting. The Accord speaks to the importance of multi-disciplinary teams combining hospital and non-hospital based resources. The Health Accord speaks to the importance of preventive health care to the overall health of Canadians. A large number of stakeholders have talked about the need for a comprehensive model of health care, a model that includes all primary health care providers within a multi-disciplinary health care system.

We understand that non-governmental membership on the Health Council will not be based on formal affiliation. However, no doubt there will be nomination guidelines established.

We are writing to respectfully suggest an important principle that we believe should be part of the Health Council membership nomination guidelines. We believe it is important that primary health care providers, not currently specified in the Canada Health Act, have representation on the Health Council. In this way, a comprehensive model of health care should find its way to discussions and issues around the Health Council deliberations. If this principled representation is not provided, Canadians may continue to be faced with discussions, issues and deliberations based only on a partial and incomplete picture of health care, particularly primary health care. This lack of representation could be a serious problem for all discussions designed to rationalize and make more affordable, an overall health care model for Canadians. We believe that Canadians expect this

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comprehensive model of health care to be fully debated and considered. The fact that most Canadians rely on optometrists for their primary eye care is a case in point.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide you and your colleagues more details concerning our recommendations at any time. We would also be pleased to coordinate or aggregate other allied health professions in this debate if you feel this would be worthwhile.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Mundle, OD
President

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