



**To the editor  
Vancouver Sun**

**Published September 18, 2010**

**Re: Harper's government ignores the looming health care crisis, Vancouver Sun, August 31, 2010**

While we agree with the basic premise of the column, which calls for more federal involvement towards making the health system more responsive to the changing health needs of Canadians, the Canadian Nurses Association takes exception to the categorization that “it’s a widely accepted fact that Canada’s medicare system is unsustainable.”

The notion of “unsustainability” has long been used to scare us into accepting further privatization of services – which only wind up costing Canada more. Robert G. Evans, one of the nation’s leading health economists, recently told MPs that medicare spending has “remained remarkably stable” at between four and five per cent of Canada’s GDP since 1975. “Opponents of medicare claim that public health care is fiscally unsustainable and that the only viable solution is a shift to more private coverage. Bluntly, this is a lie.”

The new head of the Canadian Medical Association alluded to this when he was quoted in the column saying, “what we need most, even more than increased funding, is better and more effective systems of management and governance.” Canada’s registered nurses could not agree more, and we are calling on all levels of government to work with RNs to spearhead reforms that will help Canadians get the most value from each dollar invested in health. Canada needs to try innovative approaches, such as implementing long-term strategies that keep people from getting seriously ill in the first place.

Community health promotion activities and better access to primary care providers such as nurse practitioners, physiotherapists and family physicians are part of the answer. Investments in long-term care facilities and programs to better manage chronic illnesses such as diabetes would divert patients away from more expensive hospital care. Continuous improvements to the system are the most logical way to help it keep step with the evolving demands being placed on it.

As the nation’s largest group of health-care professionals, Canada’s RNs believe that not only is medicare sustainable it is, in fact, our best hope to ensure a healthy future for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Judith Shamian'.

Judith Shamian, RN, PhD, LLD (hon), D.Sci. (hon) FAAN  
President, Canadian Nurses Association