

# **Budget 2008 misses health care**

**Published The Hill Times, March 3, 2008**

Dear Editor:

Budget 2008 has missed the opportunity to move forward on key elements of health system renewal. The Canadian Healthcare Association (CHA) welcomes the \$110 million allocation to the Mental Health Commission of Canada over five years as an important step in addressing mental health issues, which have long been ignored by the health system. Improvements to scientific research and experimental development programs are also timely.

Unfortunately, the health system as a whole is not a winner in this budget.

The funds allocated to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in this, and previous budgets, are not sufficient to maintain and promote health research. Funds allocated for student loans and grants are welcome for low and middle income students, but the programs announced in Budget 2008 have no targeted funding for the education and training of badly needed health human resources.

Shockingly, there were no funds for a comprehensive, interoperable, and secure Electronic Health Record, a necessary component of an effective, efficient and safe health system. For several years, CHA has recommended a \$6.2 billion investment over a five-year period for the electronic health record. Budget 2008 will do nothing to move this initiative forward.

Finally, roads and public transit require necessary infrastructure upgrades, but the establishment of a permanent Gas Tax Fund will not address the revitalization of aging health care facilities or support a medical diagnostic fund, linked to the safety of health workers and patients in all settings. Clearly, health, a top priority for Canadians, has been relegated to the back burner as this government turns to other issues.

Sincerely, Pamela C. Fralick  
President and CEO