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World-wide health system innovators to spark Third Way discussion

Edmonton... Identifying innovations that drive excellent health systems and healthier populations will be the focus of the Alberta Health Symposium to be held in Calgary, May 3 - 5, 2005. Approaches described at the symposium will help further develop Alberta's Third Way for health system innovation.

In releasing the symposium program, Health and Wellness Minister Iris Evans said, "We are working with The Conference Board of Canada and our symposium organizing committee to invite the best people possible to talk to us about how and why some health systems deliver better health outcomes through innovation, and about ways to help Albertans live healthier lives."

In a speech to the Canadian Club in Calgary in January, Premier Klein said Alberta's Third Way would take the best of what we have in Alberta and Canada and combine it with the best approaches we can find anywhere in the world. The symposium's current confirmed speakers include national and international experts on quality, comparative health systems, population health, aboriginal health, child health, financing, technology and innovation.

"These speakers reflect the quality and scope of discussion that Albertans can expect from this symposium," said Evans. "I am eagerly awaiting the opportunity for dialogue on health system advancement."

"The program framework will allow discussions to cover topics as broad as electronic health records, child health, modes and partnerships in health service delivery, health system incentives and other topics relevant to policy considerations in Alberta."

In 2004, The Conference Board of Canada produced a report for Alberta titled Challenging Health Care System Sustainability: Understanding Health System Performance of Leading Countries that examined how health systems in leading OECD countries are evolving and innovating.

The symposium program builds on that work and has been developed around the features of high performing systems: a public that is involved and aware, a dedicated health workforce, and strong leadership. "These themes allow a great deal of flexibility to examine how the world's more innovative health systems deliver, manage and fund their health care services," said Dr. Glen Roberts, Director of Health Programs for The Conference Board of Canada.

Over 400 participants have been invited to attend the symposium in order to ensure broad representation from physicians, nurses, other health providers, the Health Boards of Alberta (health authorities), health consumers, academics, the Aboriginal community, healthcare associations, health law and health policy specialists, health care advocates and government organizations.

"This is an important public discussion," said Evans. "I want everyone to have an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way." The public and others who would like to follow symposium discussions will have access through the Alberta Health and Wellness website at www.health.gov.ab.ca/symposium. This site will provide access to keynote speeches through live web cast and to summaries of all panel discussions.

Albertans can pose questions throughout the symposium via the website and will have access to all conference materials on line. Media will also have access to the sessions.

The Government of Alberta has committed to follow the symposium with further action on health innovation that will be timely, transparent and focused on better health outcomes.

"Alberta has been an innovator in health care in a number of ways and we intend to stay ahead and to continue to lead", said Evans. "This province can improve health outcomes for our citizens and their families and improve both access and quality of services and care. I welcome the ideas and thinking that this symposium will provoke about how to do that."

Information about the symposium is currently available on the Health and Wellness website and will be updated on a regular basis.

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Key links:

Speaker Information / Conference Board Report / Advance Program

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