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## EDITORIAL: What are we waiting for?

What does Canada have in common with North Korea and Cuba?

According to John Carpay, those totalitarian regimes are the only countries that share Canada's "model of banning private health care."

Carpay's Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms has launched legal action on behalf of two Albertans challenging Alberta's health-care monopoly.

The court applications seek to extend a Supreme Court decision involving a Quebec case to pave the way for private health insurance in Alberta. In the 2005 Chaoulli decision, the Supreme Court ruled "access to a waiting list is not access to health care" and struck down Quebec's law prohibiting the purchase of private health insurance.

The stories of the two men named in the action reveals the suffering some Albertans endure in the face of long waits for care.

Dr. Darcy Allen of Okotoks lived a nightmare of constant pain after a hockey injury that eventually forced him to stop practising dentistry.

Facing a prolonged wait for surgery, Allen opted to pay \$77,000 for surgery in Montana.

Calgarian Richard Cross suffered four years of severe and continuous pain until he shelled out \$24,236 for surgery in Arizona.

The province denied Cross' request for reimbursement on the grounds the surgery was available in Alberta. The catch 22 is it's available only if you're prepared to endure years of agony to get it.

Some argue private health insurance would destroy public health care in Canada.

Well, here's a news flash: Our cherished medicare is already on the ropes.

After years of trying to improve wait times, governments have met with only limited success, despite substantial hikes in funding.

The latest example of how far off the rails it's gone came in an Alberta auditor general's report revealing the government had plowed almost \$700 million into primary care networks without even evaluating how well they work, yet still plans a massive

increase in their funding.

In the meantime, Albertans without the resources of Allen and Cross are forced to endure agonizing pain for months or even years.

It's uncertain whether private health insurance is a viable option, but one thing's for sure, Albertans shouldn't have to endure extended suffering merely to preserve a state monopoly on health care.

If other countries allow this type of access to private care, what are we waiting for in Canada?

At the very least, this legal challenge could serve as a kick in the butt for a government that has failed for so long to provide timely care for those who desperately need it.