

'We're still going to be on a waiting list'

Pollster says public is cynical about any good coming from a health deal

By DAWN WALTON

With reports from Kevin Cox, Ingrid Peritz, André Picard and Lisa Priest

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Few expected a deal to revive medicare could be easily brokered between Ottawa and the provinces, but three days of public bickering over money and reform appear to have only deepened Canadians' cynicism about hope for meaningful change.

For those, including Andrew Kavchak, who are grappling with the shortfalls of the system, the health-care summit has stoked their anger and frustration.

Mr. Kavchak's son Steven, now 3½, was placed on a waiting list for autism treatment in December, 2003. In the interim, the Ottawa family has forked out almost \$50,000 for treatment and is now on another waiting list -- this one for financial aid for families of children with disabilities.

"My son is disabled and he needs treatment, but my family hasn't gotten one single goddamn red cent of medically necessary health care since he was diagnosed. We're on a waiting list now and we're still going to be on a waiting list when this meeting is over," Mr. Kavchak said.

"Maybe it's [the summit] one step in a very long march, but from my family's perspective, it's profoundly disappointing. The way we treat kids with autism in this country is sickening," he added.