



**ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUES
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ**

**CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHAC Endorses the National Health Forum's Vision of a Renewed Health System

Ottawa - The Final Report of the National Forum on Health represents an important attempt to provide a vision that can guide efforts to improve the health system and the health of Canadians. "Major health care changes and restructuring have been taking place throughout the country without an overall plan. The Forum's report provides a vision which preserves the key features of our health system, while at the same time allowing for adaptation to new realities and needs," said Raymond Lafond, CHAC Chairperson.

The Association very much supports the values perspective of the Report which challenges policy makers to reaffirm the fundamental social values on which the current health system is based, and which Canadians continue to define as core values. The principles defined in the Canada Health Act are rooted in a commitment to fairness, compassion, respect for the dignity of persons, and collective responsibility. The findings of the Forum indicate that Canadians continue to support these values as key to the health system.

"Maintaining the federal role in setting and enforcing national health standards is crucial," Mr. Lafond said. The report of the Forum emphasizes the important role of the federal government in preserving the underlying principles on which the health system is based: the "single payer" model, the five principles of the Canada Health Act, and continued government partnerships. The upcoming 1997 federal budget and election campaign provide an opportunity for the federal government to demonstrate its support for Canada's publicly funded health care system. The CHAC supports the call for a federal commitment to a cash floor for the Canada Health and Social Transfer, such as the \$12.5 billion suggested by the Forum, and echoes the Forum's warning that "the present structure cannot accommodate speedy and drastic reductions in funding without compromising access."

The CHAC welcomes the Forum's suggestions on how to transform the system so that it can be sustained and made more effective. The Association shares the view that medicare should be expanded to include coverage of home care and prescription drugs. The Report addresses the difficult issue of how to finance these changes and presents important strategies for investing in the health of Canadians.

The CHAC also endorses the Forum's call for action based on society's expanding knowledge of the social and economic determinants of health. Governments at all levels must take seriously the devastating health impacts of poverty, give priority to the needs of the poor and marginalized, and maintain

public policies and programs which enhance and protect the economic and social security of all. In late February, the CHAC board will be releasing a position paper that will outline values and principles, as well as strategic directions, which the Association believes are necessary if Canadians are to build upon and improve the framework which has contributed to the establishment of one of the most successful universal health care systems in the world.

- 30 -

February 5, 1997