



**ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUES
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ**

**CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHAC Encourages Government Not To Sign the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)

Ottawa — The Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) has written to the Minister for Internal Trade encouraging the Government not to sign the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) until issues related to the Canadian health care and social systems have been addressed, in consultation with health care organizations, to the satisfaction of Canadians.

The proposed multilateral agreement being negotiated by the 29 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was originally due to be signed in May 1997. The deadline was first extended to April 1998 and has now been extended indefinitely. Ratification has been held up by countries demanding exemptions in various areas of concern.

The CHAC has a number of grave concerns about the proposed agreement. “We have serious questions about the impact the MAI will have on the environment, culture, jobs, sovereignty, and most importantly, on health care and social programs in Canada,” said Kateri Ghesquiere, CSJ, CHAC Chairperson.

Numerous health agencies and associations, including the CHAC, have begun to voice their concern that the MAI will allow more for-profit involvement in health care in Canada and that governments will be unable to exclude such involvement in areas where it is not currently allowed. A concern has also been expressed that the MAI will allow transnational corporations to challenge government support for not-for-profit providers of health care and social services. “We share the concern expressed by many others that the draft reservation clause related to health care in the MAI is qualified and, therefore, inadequate to protect health care and social services from the MAI rules,” said Sister Ghesquiere.

The CHAC emphasizes that the value of human life and the quality of the human condition are seriously diminished when economic considerations become the priority. In its letter to Minister Marchi the CHAC reminds government of its leadership role in protecting the right of all Canadians to health care and in maintaining the public administration and funding of health services in Canada. “Canada’s sovereignty in this regard should not be compromised by any trade agreement.”

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