



ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUES
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ

CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEEDED: LEADERSHIP WITH SOCIAL IMAGINATION

Ottawa — Facts about poverty in Canada:

- 97% of single mothers under 25 live in poverty... ·
- child poverty is 55% higher than in 1989...
- young families are 40% more likely to live in poverty than families in general...
- the number of foodbanks has increased 187% since 1988...

In light of such realities, the time has come to ask ourselves whether current social and economic reforms meet the test of social justice, says the Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) in its newly-released position statement.

Stressing the tremendous impact which the absence of justice can have on the health and well-being of society, the Association calls for imaginative social leadership to search for effective, just and equitable solutions to Canada's social and economic problems. "We realize that in order to provide conditions for economic and social security, our governments must tackle the debt and deficit. Our challenge is to ensure that deficit and debt reduction strategies do not replace the 'fiscal deficit' with a serious 'social deficit' through the weakening of our health, education and social programs," the statement says.

Massive cuts in federal transfers have resulted in increasing trends toward for-profit health care which endanger our public, universal system in favour of a two-tiered system — one tier for the affluent and the other for the poor. The social teachings of the church remind us that all persons have an inalienable right to the basic needs of life — food, shelter, clothing, education, health care, employment, etc.

"Because of our concern for health in all its aspects (physical, emotional, spiritual and social), we question whether current reforms reflect a concern for the greater good of the community," the CHAC states. There is an urgent need for federal and provincial governments to explore, with Canadians, creative alternative approaches to:

- fight all causes of the deficit — not just health and social spending;
- develop a comprehensive job creation strategy as a way of generating economic and social security for Canadians;
- strengthen universal health and social programs through guaranteed funding and national standards.

"Current reforms are having a heavy toll on the general health of our society. The CHAC wants to foster awareness of these issues. We have chosen social justice as the focus for many of our activities in the months ahead. We will use our next national convention, for example, to explore the theme of social

justice,” said Raymond Lafond, Chairperson. The CHAC has also distributed its policy statement to its members, along with a discussion guide and action suggestions. “In finding solutions, individuals and local communities, with their unique assets and strengths, have a vital contribution to make. We hope to cultivate public commitment and action for the building of a truly healthy and just society.”

— 30 —

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