



ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUES
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ

CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHAC Writes to all Members of Parliament

Ottawa - The Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) has written to all Members of Parliament at the beginning of a new session of Parliament to highlight the issues and legislation which it believes require prompt attention by Government. The letter addresses seven issues.

1. Health Care - A Measure of the Nation's Moral Character

The CHAC has always valued a deep sense of compassion and caring for persons in need. That same sense of collective responsibility has motivated Canadians to empower governments to play a direct role in alleviating economic disparity, and in addressing threats to well-being posed by illness or disability, by establishing a publicly funded and administered health care system. The CHAC believes that the current debate about the future of Canada's health system provides an opportunity to re-examine and reaffirm the values that gave rise to Medicare.

2. Private Financing and Canada's Publicly Funded Health Care System

The CHAC is concerned about a number of developments that threaten Canada's publicly funded health system. It is especially disquieting to note that some provincial governments are seeking to increase areas of private financing in health care and are looking to the for-profit sector, and to the possible establishment of private for-profit hospitals, to remedy problems in Canada's health system. The CHAC is calling on the Federal Government to demonstrate its leadership by committing itself to increased, long-term, sustainable funding for Canada's publicly funded health system. The Association has also called on the Government to discharge more strictly its political and legal responsibilities to enforce the provisions of the *Canada Health Act*.

3. Home and Community Care

One of the primary recommendations of the National Forum on Health was to bring home care under the umbrella of the publicly funded health care system. The CHAC believes that funding for core health services should not be restricted to physician and hospital care, but should be reoriented to focus on a range of services, including home and community care. The Association supports the creation of a more cost-effective and holistic system; one that represents a continuum of care that flows from health-promoting community-based services, to community care and home care, and on to hospital care for the most ill members of the population.

4. Human Reproductive and Genetic Technologies Legislation

In June of 1996, three years after the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies submit-

ted its report, the Government introduced Bill C-47 (the *Human Reproductive and Genetic Technologies Act*). The CHAC believes the prohibition of 13 problematic procedures outlined in the Bill represented an important step in safeguarding respect for human life and dignity, and for the values of Canadians. Health Minister Allan Rock has indicated that he intends to introduce new legislation before the end of the year. The CHAC believes there is a consensus among Canadians regarding the need to put legal limits on the use of these technologies and to establish a licensing and regulatory body to manage their use.

5. Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

There is mounting pressure on government to propose legislation that would legalize euthanasia and lessen penalties for those who assist in suicide. The CHAC supports the recommendation of the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (1995) that euthanasia and assisted suicide continue to be offences under the Criminal Code. The Association does not support the Committee's recommendation to amend the Criminal Code to provide for a less severe penalty on the grounds of compassion or mercy. Such discretionary sentencing could allow murder to be disguised as "compassionate homicide." The CHAC believes resources should be committed to improving palliative care as one effective way of facing the challenges that pain and suffering pose.

6. Bill C-80 - Canada Food Safety and Inspection Act

On April 22, 1999 Bill C-80 was introduced. The CHAC shares the concerns expressed by many Canadians that such legislation would seriously weaken consumer protection and safety in the existing and future food marketplace. Of particular concern is the fact that Bill C-80 would permanently place food safety in the hands of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency whose conflicting mandate is to promote agri-food trade and sales. The Association would oppose legislation that leads to a deregulated food industry that is left to police itself. The CHAC is also opposed to the dismantling of the independent science base that is needed to guard the safety of Canada's food supply.

7. The Impact of Social Factors on Health

In April, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released a study calling on governments to pay more attention to the impact of inequality on the health of Canadians. The report contends that improving the health of Canadians necessitates tackling social and economic conditions that are crucial for a healthy population. The CHAC believes it is imperative that the social, economic and ecological determinants of health be incorporated into public policy development, and it urges the Federal Government to address the growing divide between rich and poor that is putting the health of Canadians at greater risk.