



**Catholic
Health
Association
of Canada**

For Immediate Release
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CHAC opposes call for ban on religious hospitals

(Ottawa) – On December 4, Dr. Henry Morgentaler issued a statement saying hospitals in Canada should end any affiliation with religious bodies. He highlighted Catholic hospitals in particular, saying that such religious affiliation interferes with the “reproductive rights of Canadian women.”

The Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) opposes this call for a ban on religious hospitals and emphasizes the important role faith-based hospitals play in Canada’s health care system.

Many of the present-day health care institutions in Canada were founded by Christian churches, including the Catholic church. “That original spirit and mission – to care for those who are sick and suffering – continues to prompt Catholic health care institutions to respond to the needs of Canadians with compassion, respect for human dignity, and social responsibility,” said Richard Haughian, CHAC President.

In his news release, Dr. Morgentaler harshly criticized the Catholic position on abortion. The CHAC supports the teaching of the church that human life begins at conception and is to be treasured, respected and protected from conception to death. The Association opposes direct abortions which it sees as the taking of innocent human life.

The CHAC challenges the suggestion, made in Dr. Morgentaler’s statement, that a constitutional right to abortion has been established in Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada created a legal vacuum in 1988 when it struck down the law against abortion. The Court did not decide that there is a constitutional right to have an abortion or that government’s have an obligation to provide abortion services.

Dr. Morgentaler’s statements also do not acknowledge the lack of consensus that exists on the issue of whether abortion should be considered as a “medically necessary” service under the Canada Health Act. Several provinces have chosen not to include abortion in their lists of medically necessary services.

This lack of consensus is also evident in statistics released in October by LifeCanada suggesting only 23 per cent of Canadians want all abortions to be publicly funded.

The CHAC also objects to statements by Dr. Morgentaler and other spokespersons that Catholic hospitals are depriving Canadians of services. The reality is that as health care reform has evolved in Canada no hospital provides all services and procedures. The suggestion that Catholic hospitals do not provide HIV/AIDS services is especially misleading. Several Catholic hospitals excel in providing care to persons suffering with HIV/AIDS – St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto, and St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver are two outstanding examples. “Dr. Morgentaler’s comments present a very narrow perspective of the services provided by hospitals and overlook the broader health care needs of Canadians,” said Mr. Haughian.

In his statement, Dr. Morgentaler emphasized that Canada is a multicultural and pluralistic society. He suggests that because of this governments and institutions must be values neutral. The CHAC believes a truly pluralistic society is one that affirms the contribution that faith-based health care institutions can bring to the health care system by acting according to their conscience, principles and traditions.

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The Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) is a national Christian association supportive of health care in the tradition of the Catholic Church. As the national voice for Catholic health care, the CHAC acts to promote health in all its aspects: physical, emotional, spiritual and social. Its membership includes seven provincial associations; 34 sponsors/owners of health care organizations; 127 hospitals and homes; health care professionals; and affiliate organizations and individuals.

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