



For Immediate Release  
November 8, 2001

Catholic  
Health  
Association  
of Canada

# Evidence Does Not Support Senate Committee Assumptions

## CHAC Brief to the Senate Committee Reviewing the Health Care System

Fredericton - The Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) has urged the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to ensure that its final recommendations concerning the federal government's role in health care are evidence-based. A CHAC spokesperson made the comments in a hearing before the Senate Committee in Fredericton today.

"The report suggests that user charges, medical savings accounts, contracting with private for-profit health care providers, and extending private insurance could be implemented in ways that would avoid the risks to fairness associated with these approaches. Such a conclusion appears to ignore the authoritative research on these subjects," said Mrs. Sandra Keon, CHAC Secretary-Treasurer.

The Senate Committee began a major review last year of the health care system. In September it tabled its fourth report. The report, *Issues and Options*, introduces a range of options for overhauling Medicare. It suggests that Canada's health care system is unsustainable and that contentious options such as user fees and contracting out health care services to for-profit health care corporations must be considered. Among the options considered are: direct payments by patients, and creating parallel public and private doctor and hospital systems.

Over the past month the Senate Committee has held public hearings in all 10 provincial capitals. Its goal has been to initiate a debate about these issues and to hear the views of Canadians on its presentation of options.

In several locations witnesses raised concerns about a possible conflict of interest on the part of Senator Kirby. Senator Kirby chairs the Senate Committee. He also sits on the board of Extendicare, one of the country's largest private health care corporations. "The report's analysis is rooted in market ideology and clearly favours turning to for-profit health care providers and institutions as the best way to address problems in the health care system," said Mrs. Keon after the hearing. "We believe it is important that the Senate understand that Senator Kirby's connection to Extendicare has certainly raised concerns among Canadians that the Committee's report may be biased."

In its submission the CHAC asked what evidence there is that private, for-profit health care is cheaper and more efficient than public health care. Numerous presenters before the Committee have insisted that hopes for increased efficiency through increased provision of for-profit health care have no empirical support and face extensive counter-evidence. There is strong evidence that the growth of for-profit health care will increase - not decrease - costs, and tends to decrease quality.

- 30 -

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; 23 sponsors/owners of health care organizations; 95 hospitals and long-term care organizations; health care professionals; and affiliate organizations and individuals.