



For Immediate Release
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Catholic
Health
Association
of Canada

CHAC Brief to the Romanow Commission

**Without attention to values
there can be no good health policy**

Ottawa - The Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) has urged the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada not to lose sight of the fundamental values that have formed the foundation of Canada's health and social policy, and which can provide direction in the current effort to build a more responsive and effective health care system.

The Commission, headed by former Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow, has been mandated to develop recommendations that will help ensure the long-term sustainability of a high quality, universally accessible, publicly administered health care system for all Canadians. During this initial fact-finding phase health organizations have been invited to send formal submissions outlining their views on the issues being addressed by the Commission. Phase 1 of the Commission's work will be completed in January 2002 with the presentation of an "interim report." The Commission will present its final recommendations to the federal government in the Fall of 2002.

In its submission the CHAC notes that the current health policy environment is driven almost exclusively by economics. The paper states that when the basis of policy development is economics it is not surprising that the implementation of such policy focuses on cutbacks, downsizing and withdrawal of services as a primary focus.

"While there is a need to restructure health care services," said Dr. Leo Klug, CHAC Chairperson, "the way this has been done thus far has undermined care provider and public confidence. For many Canadians the goals of the health care system have become unclear and there is a growing sense of confusion and insecurity about the sustainability of our public, not-for-profit system and its ability to meet our needs in the future."

The CHAC submission emphasizes that any rethinking of Canada's health care system requires a reaffirmation of the societal values that gave rise to the system, a critical analysis of new and emerging values, and a change in the focus of the discussion from the marketplace toward a discussion of the core values that will make for a humane future, an equitable social order, and a quality health care system.

The submission highlights those values that the CHAC believes must inform health care decision making and policy. "The CHAC believes these core values can provide both a vision for health in the future as well as a means to assess the wide ranging alternatives currently being promoted for organizing, funding and expanding health care services in Canada," said Dr. Klug.

In the brief, these values are applied to some of the most pressing health policy issues. The list of issues addressed includes:

- The need to maintain a publicly funded model of health care
- The importance of the federal role in health care
- The need to develop a continuum of care
- The importance of a universal drug care plan (pharmacare)
- The urgency of primary care reform
- Sustainability and accountability
- The implications of for-profit health care
- The problems associated with user charges
- The impact of international trade agreements on health care
- The role of faith-based health care organizations

- 30 -

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