



Catholic
Health
Association
of Canada

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Romanow Report: Medicare is a “moral enterprise, not a business venture”

(Ottawa) – “Commissioner Roy Romanow’s Final Report is an outstanding blueprint for securing medicare’s future,” said Janet Brown, Chairperson of the Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC). “Canadian governments must now work together to implement immediately the report’s recommendations,” Mrs. Brown said.

The CHAC is pleased that most of the issues the Association raised in its submission to the Commission, and some of its recommendations, are included in the Report. Canadians have expressed pride in the work of the Commission and see themselves reflected in this Report.

The CHAC endorses the Report and affirms, in particular, the following points from it.

1. Values as the starting point of health policy

The Report presents a clarion call reaffirming the values that gave rise to medicare, and expresses a statement about the kind of society we want to create. “Medicare is a reflection of Canadians’ desire to build a caring and compassionate society.”

The CHAC is particularly pleased to see that the Commission adopted the recommendation of the Ecumenical Health Care Network (of which CHAC is a member) that a new Canadian Health Covenant be established. The Covenant would present a clear statement of the values that underlie the health system and should guide its future development.

2. Medicare is sustainable

Mr. Romanow has provided a passionate defense of medicare and, on the basis of extensive research and evidence, has shown that it has consistently delivered affordable, timely, accessible

and high quality care. At the same time, Mr. Romanow has clearly identified challenges and problems in the system, and has put forward a comprehensive plan to address those problems.

That plan calls for better leadership, greater responsiveness and accountability, and transformative changes that will ensure long-term sustainability. The CHAC agrees with Mr. Romanow's conclusion that medicare is sustainable if Canadians want it to be, and if we are prepared to act decisively as a nation to implement his recommendations.

3. The rejection of private, for-profit delivery as a solution

For the past 18 months Mr. Romanow has challenged those advocating for-profit solutions to bring forth evidence supporting their position. His report indicates that evidence has not been forthcoming. The CHAC has argued that there is no clear evidence that private, for-profit health care providers will deliver better or cheaper care, or improved access.

4. Expansion of medicare

The Report recommends that the Canada Health Act (CHA) be revised to include home care services in priority areas. This would include post-acute home care, including drugs and rehab services, as well as coverage of palliative care in the home during the last six months of life. It calls for a program to immediately cover so-called "catastrophic" drug costs. In the long term, the Canada Health Act would be expanded to cover the cost of prescription drugs. The Report also calls for the creation of a National Drug Agency to control skyrocketing drug costs.

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"Medicare represents a great national achievement." said Mrs. Brown, "We now look to governments to exercise the leadership that will be required to build on this achievement and to transform medicare into a comprehensive health system that will provide compassionate, quality care in the years ahead."

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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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