

Canadian Health Coalition



Coalition canadienne de la santé

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January 21, 1981

Senator Harry Hays,
Serge Joyal, M.P.,
Co-Chairmen,
Special Joint Committee
on the Constitution,
c/o Mr. Richard Pregent,
Clerk of the Committee,
Room 512, Metropolitan Building,
180 Wellington Street,
Ottawa, Ontario



Gentlemen:

The Canadian Health Coalition is a diverse and broadly based group of organizations which have banded together to demonstrate their concern about Canada's health care system. At present, the Coalition consists of more than 8 provincial coalitions and more than 30 national organizations and represents the interests of the consumers of health services across the country. The Coalition is primarily interested in preventing a further erosion in medicare, encouraging substantial changes and improvements in the existing health care system and increasing the involvement of consumers in the development and planning of health services.

Representatives of the Health Coalition have reviewed the Proposed Resolution for a Joint Address to Her Majesty the Queen respecting the Constitution of Canada and, in particular, Part I, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We were disappointed to note the lack of any reference to the right to a high standard of health and the right to adequate and appropriate health care.

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Although improvements are needed, the Canadian Health Coalition believes that Canada has one of the best health care systems in the world. This has largely been the result of an evolution in our thinking from a point where health care was considered a privilege to our present notion of health care as a right. We believe that the vast majority of Canadians would accept without reservation the premise that access to health care is a right of all citizens which should not be affected by socio-economic status, residency or other such factors. The failure to include the right to health and health care appears to ignore this fundamental change in the thinking of Canadians.

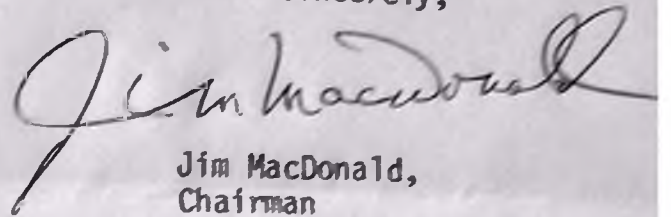
It should also be pointed out that Canada is a party to the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights. Article 12 of the Covenant is of particular relevance. It affirms that:

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
2. The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for:
 - (a) The provision for the reduction of the stillbirth-rate and of infant mortality and for the healthy development of the child;
 - (b) The improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene;
 - (c) The prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases;
 - (d) The creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness.

The Canadian Health Coalition believes that, as a signatory to the above Covenant, Canada has implicitly endorsed the concept of health and health care as a right. The time is ripe to make such a declaration more explicit and meaningful. The Canadian Health Coalition believes that this can

best be done by incorporating the right to health and health care in the proposed charter of rights and freedoms. We urge members of the committee to give serious consideration to our request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim MacDonald". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jim MacDonald,
Chairman

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