

May 16, 2003

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien
Prime Minister
Room 309-S, Centre Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Chrétien,

We are writing to congratulate you and the First Ministers for having established, through the Health Accord, common ground on which to revive and expand this country's public health care system. During the course of the Romanow Commission's public consultations, our Ecumenical Health Care Network presented a brief at the Ottawa hearings, with a Health Care Covenant for all People in Canada at the heart of our presentation. We were pleased that the Commission report proposed a Health Covenant and also that the 2003 Health Accord used covenant language.

We understand that work is already underway to create a Health Council that will monitor and make annual public reports on the implementation of the Accord, especially its accountability and transparency provisions. We also understand that some decisions regarding the Council are expected sometime in May 2003.

We urge you to ensure that the Council be truly independent, that it be given a clear and significant mandate, and that it invite an on-going broad base of public participation in decisions affecting the future of our health care system. The Council must be an instrument that improves accountability to the public on the implementation of health care decisions. It must also foster collaboration and collective action among governments to improve public health care and promote public good. How are you planning to ensure the independence of the new Health Council?

We also urge the Council to adopt the Health Care Covenant as the set of values and principles that will shape how the Council will operate. The Covenant could become the set of guiding principles for policy makers, health care managers and health providers. It would provide an important reference point for the choices that will be made. Our health care system should be guided by a Covenant of values under girding a caring and compassionate society. Will you include the development of a Health Covenant as part of the new Health Council? What will be the process of public participation in shaping the work of the Council and the Health Covenant?

Yours sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary
The Canadian Council of Churches