

## A who's who of health care commissions and committees

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### **Romanow Commission – Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada**

Roy Romanow, former Premier of Saskatchewan, was appointed by the Prime Minister to examine the sustainability of a universally accessible and publicly funded health care system. He issued his final report in November 2002.

Romanow left no doubt that a publicly funded, single-payer model of health care is sustainable and can be expanded. He is clear that public, not-for-profit health care is superior to private, for-profit care and that governments should not subsidize private health care with public dollars.

He did not, however, make specific recommendations to ban for-profit care and he failed to understand the importance of publicly delivered support services.

Unions, community groups, non-governmental organizations, health coalitions and the many individuals who appeared before the Commission can take credit for the many progressive recommendations in Romanow's report. They now need to lobby the federal and provincial governments to implement those recommendations.

### **Kirby Committee – Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology**

In March 2001 the Senate asked its Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to examine the principles behind our health care system, its pressures and constraints, alternatives around the world and the federal role.

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Committee chair, Senator Michael Kirby, has extensive connections to health care corporations, serving as a director of Extendicare, the long term care and home care giant.

The Committee's final report, released in October 2002, called on the federal government to increase health spending by \$5 billion per year to fund a partial drug program and post-acute home care and palliative care. These proposals fall far short of Canadians' expectations for an expanded and strengthened Medicare system.

Not surprisingly, the Kirby Committee did not make any recommendations against the privatization of health care. In fact, the report says that ownership of health facilities and services does not make any difference.

#### **Mazankowski Council – Premier's Advisory Council on Health in Alberta**

In August 2000 Premier Klein established an advisory council, chaired by Don Mazankowski, to kick-start health care privatization in Alberta.

The Council was stacked with pro-privatization appointees including Mazankowski, who was the minister of privatization under Brian Mulroney. Maz's corporate connections include Power Corporation, Great West Lifeco and Investors' Group.

The Council's final report in December 2001 contained 44 recommendations. All 44 were accepted by the Alberta government, establishing the foundation for two-tier health care.

#### **Fyke Commission – Saskatchewan Commission on Medicare**

In June 2000 Kenneth Fyke was appointed by then Premier Romanow to head a Commission to recommend actions for the delivery of health services in Saskatchewan. The Commission reported in April 2001.

The Commission's recommendations on primary health care reform, specialized care, equity within the system, and the restructuring of health districts were favourably received by CUPE and other progressive organizations.

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### **Clair Commission – Commission d'étude sur les services de santé et les services sociaux**

In June 2000 the Québec government appointed Michel Clair to chair a Commission on the financing and organization of health care and social services. The Commission conducted public hearings and reported in January 2001 with 36 recommendations.

The recommendations promoted the private sector as a partner in financing health and social services. The Commission supported public private partnerships in contracting out diagnostic testing and minor day surgery; building long term care facilities; and purchasing and using new technologies. The Commission also recommended an expansion of physician-owned clinics.

### **Manitoba Public Health Consultations**

In January 2002 the Manitoba health minister established a consultation process to examine the challenges and choices the government faces in delivering health services. A summary of the consultations entitled Health Choices was issued in April 2002. A final report has yet to be issued.

### **Newfoundland Primary Care Advisory Committee**

In September 2001 the health and community services minister appointed Kathy LeGrow to chair a Primary Care Advisory Committee. The Committee reported in December 2001 focusing on the role of the family physician in primary care. The report advocated teamwork among family doctors and other health professionals.

### **New Brunswick Premier's Health Quality Council**

Premier Lord appointed Michel Leger to chair the Health Council in January 2000. Recommendations in the January 2002 final report include: a community-based network of health centres, more nurse practitioners, and a patient charter of rights. The report did not recommend user fees, privatization or hospital closures.

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