



The Canadian Council of Churches
47 Queen's Park Crescent East Toronto, ON M5S 2C3, Canada
Tel: 416-972-9494 Fax: 416-927-0405 Toll Free: 1-866-822-7645
Email: admin@ccc-cce.ca Website: <http://www.ccc-cce.ca>

A HEALTH CARE COVENANT FOR ALL PEOPLE IN CANADA

**The Ecumenical Health Care Network
of
The Canadian Council of Churches
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Preamble

People in Canada understand that how we care for others defines the nature of who we are as a national community. We also know that what we owe each other is essential for who we are as a people. Thus, we have empowered our governments to steward public resources and develop and administer social policy for the common good of all; to ensure that, *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 25

As signatory to the World Health Organization Charter, we in Canada have pledged ourselves to a holistic vision of well-being that understands 'health' as [...] *a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*

As members of a national community, we in Canada understand that a community actively promotes and nurtures health through compassion, mutuality, care, trust, respect, security and active attention to what justice requires of us.

Thus, in fulfillment of our mutual responsibilities, we and our governments solemnly promise to actively pursue and safeguard a holistic and integrated vision of health care for all people in Canada.

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Through government, we in Canada pledge to:

Universal Access, Comprehensiveness and Portability

- provide access to comprehensive health care services for individuals, families and communities that places the priority on the worth and dignity of the whole person and their biological, emotional, physical, environmental, social and spiritual needs wherever they may be in Canada;

Social Solidarity and Justice

- uphold a health care system through which all people in Canada share the benefits of health and the burdens of illness with particular compassion for the weak, caring for the vulnerable, solidarity with our neighbours and a commitment to social justice for all;

Open to All People in Canada

- preserve inviolate a health care system that applies to all people in Canada without discrimination toward race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, ability, disability, ethnic origin, language, place of residence, economic status, religion or any other distinction;

Social Health and Well-being

- utilize a systemic approach to creating public policies that, intentionally integrate the social, economic, cultural and environmental determinants of well-being with health;

Human Right and Public Good

- ensure that access to health care is maintained as a human right and a public good, recognizing that health care interactions have meaning to people as a place of caring; health care is not a commodity;

Honour the Vocation and Contribution of All Health Care Providers

- utilize fully the capabilities of all health care professionals, including indigenous practitioners covered under the Canada Health Act, and honour the vocation of all who provide care, whether paid or unpaid;

Public Stewardship and Accountability

- safeguard public administration and limit for-profit delivery of care through mutually enforceable federal and provincial regulations upholding standards of public accountability for a system that addresses the health care needs of individuals, families and communities;

Collaboration and Shared Responsibility

- develop and sustain a health care system founded upon the principles of collaboration and shared responsibility between governments and among providers, not competition or market imperatives; and

Participation and Decision-making

- recognize that health is unique to individuals, families and communities and as such, to honour the right of people to participate in the decisions that affect them and their health.