

## ABSTRACT

### **Key Issues: A Provincial Vision of the future Canadian Health System** *A Brief from the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association*

#### **Introduction**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association (NLHBA) is the federation of regional Health Boards that deliver the broad range of health services offered in the province. The NLHBA is presenting discussion and recommendations on the future of the Canadian health system based on our provincial experience of what works and what needs to change in the current health system, and on our interpretation of Canadian and international health trends. The discussion will focus on Canadian values, sustainability and managing change.

#### **1. Values and Sustainability: the Publicly-funded Canadian Health System**

The federal government is urged to take the lead in promoting and supporting the values of the Canada Health Act, which are strongly supported in this province. This will require strengthening the federal position by clarifying and increasing the federal contribution to health funding.

**1.1 Change Management: Jurisdiction and Funding.** The current funding system requires revisiting to ensure that funding contributes to an equitable health system. The current form of the CHST, its funding allocation formula and the Equalization program promote inequities, and do not ensure that Canada and its health system functions in the best interests of all its people.

#### **1.2 Strategic directions for Sustainable funding for the public health system.**

Spending on health is not out of control in comparison with other OECD countries. The federal/provincial funding balance should be readjusted and a strategic funding formula developed for the health system to demonstrate that federal funding allocation is equitable. Public spending on health should be brought up to at least the average of the top 5 OECD countries.

#### **2. Sustainability: the Canadian Public Health System is not broken.**

To support the statement that the Canadian public health system is functioning reasonably well, examples are given of the development and reform of the health system in this province based on population health values, the determinants of health, partnerships and the planned management of change.

#### **3. Support for Strategic Planning.**

We believe that strategic thinking and leadership at Federal level is urgently needed. Using the Romanow consultations and final report, together with our knowledge of the determinants of health, Health Canada should develop a Canadian strategic health plan with a wellness focus based on the same strategic directions as the strategic funding model.

#### **3.1 Values: Wellness Focus.**

- Funding must follow principle, particularly at delivery level. Wellness initiatives are not cost-neutral.
- Public education is needed for understanding any change
- Partnerships with other social sectors are essential. Health Canada should take the lead in strategically addressing matters under federal control.

**3.2 Standards.** Clear national standards are needed in the health system.

**3.3 Cost-Drivers.** Federal leadership is needed to address national and international issues such as drug prices and gene patents.

**4. Evidence-based Decision Making and Change.** Health systems have been faulted in the past for not basing decisions on reliable evidence. No further decisions on change should be made without good evidence that the proposed change will improve the health system. We need to evaluate the health system thoroughly in order to gather such data and to invest in technology that can efficiently undertake and continue that evaluation.

**5. Conclusion.**

The NLHBA welcomes the opportunity to discuss these issues, and looks forward to leadership from the Federal Government in strategic planning for a future health system for Canadians that preserves the values of the Canada Health Act, focusses on the determinants of health and promotes wellness.