

**Remarks by Kathleen Connors
CHC National Chairperson to the
CFNU Celebration of Medicare**

September 12, 2004
Ottawa, Ontario

Good Afternoon Everyone!

Thank you to the CFNU for organizing and hosting this afternoon's Celebration of Medicare and for including the CHC in this celebration.

The CHC is 25 years old this year- a testament to the fact that diverse groups and organizations came together in 1979 following a CLC SOS Medicare conference. They came together and remain together 25 years later to defend, protect, and improve Medicare. The passion for the work was there then and remains there today.

As we plan for the future it is always important to know and to Remember our past ---to remember where you've come from. On the eve of a crucial meeting that has been billed as the one that will fix Medicare for a generation, it is important to reflect and celebrate where Medicare came from. It came from a vision of a

Canadian political leader Tommy Douglas in an economically poor province; but a province rich in people who shared core values, equity, fairness, solidarity! From a people and a political leader who possessed the will to do what was necessary to put Medicare in place.

Today Medicare continues to speak eloquently to our values as a nation and to our priorities as a people---Equity, Fairness, Solidarity!

Roy Romanow's Commission on the Future of Health Care In Canada , its process, and its final report, BUILDING ON VALUES, continues to provide a roadmap for a collective journey by Canadians to reform and renew our health care system.

The report was not called, OPEN UP CANADA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM TO MARKET FORCES as Senators Kirby and Keon would encourage.

People, values and care remain the core of what Canadians see as necessary to anchor Medicare. People, values and care NOT profit for shareholders.



Kathleen Connors

Canadian Health Coalition, National Chairperson

Most of us in this room have known nothing but universal, accessible, comprehensive, portable and publicly administered Medicare for all of our adult lives. Care has been there without question, without a check on my bank balance where and when my family or have needed it---the birth of our daughter, my father and my sister's battles and ultimate death with cancer, my husband's life-threatening illness, and my own struggle with cancer. Our family did not have to mortgage our future. We received the care that was necessary- diagnostics, surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, home care and palliative care. Care provided by competent caring nurses and Dr's , technicians and technologists, and supported by clerks, dietary, housekeeping and physical plant staff working as a team. Not once did we consider Medicare as a commodity to be bought or sold. It was there when and where we needed it. That should be true for all Canadians, including our First nation's people. Our family is not unique.

The fundamental values of Medicare must not be bargained or bartered away. Every precious dollar must continue to be spent on care and not one penny on profit! That is what we're here to celebrate today!

- ❑ **A health care system that is financially sustainable**
- ❑ **That directs public funds to care not profit**
- ❑ **That uses new money to buy change-for homecare, long term care a national pharmaceutical strategy with national standards**
- ❑ **A health care system that reduces wait times**
- ❑ **That addresses the social determinants of Health**
- ❑ **That enforces the CHA**
- ❑ **That addresses health promotion and health protection**
- ❑ **That protects the system from trade agreements**

A tall order—Maybe! But no more difficult than establishing Medicare in the first place! We are watching! We want to continue to celebrate Medicare! Let us toast our most cherished social program and the political courage necessary to maintain and improve it!!

TO MEDICARE !!!