

The Hill Times (September 6, 2004)

Market forces aren't a panacea for health reform

Senators Michael Kirby and Wilbert Keon have recently re-issued proposals to open up Canada's health care system to "market forces."

They never let the facts get in the way of their ideology. They ignore the evidence presented to them by Dr. Arnold Relman, editor emeritus of the New Journal of Medicine and Professor Emeritus of Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Relman told the Kirby committee that most of the current problems of the U.S. system result from the growing encroachment of private for-profit ownership and competitive markets on a sector of the economy that properly belongs in the public domain.

By its very nature, health care is fundamentally different from most other goods and services distributed in commercial markets. Markets are simply not designed to deal effectively with the delivery of medical and health care.

As the Romanow report concluded, Canadians view medicare as a moral enterprise, not a business venture. In contrast, the Kirby-Keon report wants patients to be seen through the eyes of an American-style health management organization - as "a source of revenue."

Moral teachers point out that the value of human life and the quality of the human condition are seriously diminished when reduced to purely economic considerations. The business model of an Extendicare Inc., a World Heart Corporation, or even a Nortel, does not embody the values and behaviour Canadians expect from their health care institutions.

Why do Senators Kirby and Keon think the ability to maximize profits, avoid liabilities, pursue opportunities for growth, dispose of assets, and relocate outside the country, is something Canada's health care system should emulate?

Peer-reviewed evidence clearly shows that market-driven health care: a) has higher death rates; b) costs more; c) provides lower quality; d) engages in schemes to cheat taxpayers; e) compromises access to public services; and f) lacks public accountability as contracts are confidential.

Senators Kirby and Keon keep bringing forward discredited market-based proposals for health care reform.

They have also taken the unprecedented step of intervening in the Supreme Court of Canada to have the legal framework governing medicare struck down as unconstitutional.

Would their recommendations yield financial advantages for particular influential businesses?

**Michael McBane, National Coordinator
Canadian Health Coalition**

Ottawa Citizen (September 7, 2004)

Commercial health care is bad for us

Letter to the Editor

Re: Let market forces drive medicare: report (Aug. 30)

Senators Michael Kirby and Wilbert Keon never let the facts get in the way of their ideology.

International experience over the last 50 years demonstrates that greater reliance on commercial markets is associated with inferior system performance in health care. They ignored this evidence when it was presented to them by Dr. Arnold Relman, editor emeritus of the New England Journal of Medicine.

Dr. Relman told the Kirby committee that most of the current problems of the U.S. system result from the growing encroachment of private for-profit ownership and competitive markets on a sector of the economy that properly belongs in the public domain. No health-care system in the industrialized world is as heavily commercialized as the American, and none is as expensive, inefficient, and inequitable, or unpopular.

By its very nature, health care is fundamentally different from most other goods and services distributed in commercial markets. Markets are simply not designed to deal effectively with the delivery of medical and health care.

As the Romanow report said, Canadians view medicare as a moral enterprise, not a business venture. In contrast, the Kirby-Keon report wants patients to be seen as "a source of revenue."

The business model of an Extencicare Inc., a World Heart Corporation, or even a Nortel, does not embody the values and behaviour Canadians expect from their health care institutions.

Since when is the ability to maximize profits, avoid liabilities, pursue opportunities for growth, dispose of assets and relocate outside the country, something Canada's health care system should emulate?

Peer-reviewed evidence clearly shows that market-driven, for-profit health care has higher death rates, costs more, provides lower quality, engages in schemes to cheat taxpayers, compromises access to public services, and lacks public accountability as contracts are confidential.

Canadians don't want this corporate virus infecting their health-care system.

**Michael McBane, National Coordinator
Canadian Health Coalition**

National Post (September 1, 2004)

Charting Medicare's future

Letter to the Editor

Re: Make Hospitals 'Compete' For Patients, Report Says (Aug. 30)

Senators Michael Kirby and Wilbert Keon never let the facts get in the way of their ideology. They ignore the evidence presented to them by Dr. Arnold Relman, editor emeritus of the New Journal of Medicine and professor emeritus of Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Relman told the Kirby committee that most of the current problems of the U.S. system result from the growing encroachment of private for-profit ownership and competitive markets on a sector of the economy that properly belongs in the public domain. By its very nature, health care is fundamentally different from most other goods and services distributed in commercial markets. Markets are simply not designed to deal effectively with the delivery of medical and health care.

As the Romanow report concluded, Canadians view medicare as a moral enterprise, not a business venture. In contrast, the Kirby-Keon report wants patients to be seen through the eyes of a U.S.-style health management organization, as "a source of revenue."

The business model of an Extendicare Inc., a World Heart Corporation, or even a Nortel, does not embody the values and behaviour Canadians expect from their health care institutions. Why do Senators Kirby and Keon think the ability to maximize profits, avoid liabilities, pursue opportunities for growth, dispose of assets and relocate outside the country, is something Canada's health care system should emulate?

Peer-reviewed evidence clearly shows that market-driven health care has higher death rates, costs more, provides lower quality, engages in schemes to cheat taxpayers, compromises access to public services and lacks public accountability as contracts are confidential.

Canadians don't want this American nightmare.

**Michael McBane, National Coordinator
Canadian Health Coalition**