Health Care Values – Friday, 21 March, 2003

"Canadians consider equal and timely access to medically necessary health care services on the basis of need as a right of citizenship, not a privilege of status or wealth....They want and expect their governments to work together to ensure that the policies and programs that define medicare remain true to these values."

(Roy Romanow, *Building on Values: The Future of Health Care in Canada*, the Final Report of the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, Nov. 2002)

The Romanow report on the future of health care in Canada was the product of an unprecedented consultation with Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That fact explains its undeniable credibility. It was an effort in public involvement in which CPRN played a crucial role.

In the winter of 2001-2002, CPRN organized 12 one-day intensive dialogue sessions with citizens, randomly selected to provide a representative cross-section of the Canadian population. Using the ChoiceWork Dialogue methodology developed by CPRN's partner, Viewpoint Learning, these groups of Canadians developed a vision for the future of health care based on those values they held dearest. They then worked through the difficult trade-offs and choices required to realize their vision.

The outcomes were remarkably consistent across all 12 dialogue groups, suggesting the same consistency in their underlying values as applied to health care. To the traditional values of universal access based on need, payment based on ability to pay, and equity, dialogue participants added efficiency and accountability to their core health care values.

In a recent presentation to a British Columbia's Ministry of Health Planning expert panel, CPRN's President, Judith Maxwell reviews the values that emerged during last year's citizens' dialogues, and sketches out their implications for the role of the public sector, the private sector, health care providers, and for citizens themselves, in the health care system of the future.

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