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NEWS RELEASE

Medicare not Viable Using the Romanow Report's Premises for Health Care Reform, Says New IRPP Study

***Kirby Report's model is more likely to ensure that Canadians have
access to state-of-the-art health care in the 21st century***

***Institute for
Research on
Public Policy***

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recherche
en politiques
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Montreal – In a study published today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (irpp.org), Thomas J. Courchene is critical of the Romanow Report's four underlying principles, which the Report suggests uphold "Canadian values."

Courchene argues that these values "fall well short of a blueprint" for a successful transition of Canada's health care into the 21st century. And, he concludes that the Senate Committee Report (Kirby) has greater potential to transform medicare into "one of the leading-edge economic sectors for employment, innovation, research and exports," and in the process, this will generate state-of-the-art health care.

The author criticises Romanow for discouraging experimentation with alternative approaches to health care provision. It is "a peculiar position indeed when Canada knows that medicare owes its very existence to creative experimentation in Saskatchewan," says Courchene. He further argues that ensuring a state-of-the-art health care system will require that Canadians broaden their vision of medicare as primarily a "moral enterprise" to one that recognizes it "as *both* an essential social institution *and* a dynamic economic sector."

In describing this hybrid mission for medicare, Courchene foresees a quick upsurge of competitive, specialized diagnostic and treatment centers that will operate separately but in alignment with the hospital sector. These privately-owned specialized centers will be cost effective and will significantly improve the quality of service, both in terms of access and timeliness. "The policy issue here, says Courchene, is not whether they should be allowed to proliferate, but rather how they ought to be integrated with Canada's health care system."

In this context, Courchene sees great value in the recommendations put forward in the Kirby Report, in particular those that involve a "health care guarantee" and a reinterpretation of the public administration principle of the *Canada Health Act* to be agnostic in terms of whether the health care providers are government-owned, not-for-profit, or private enterprises. The Kirby Report's "operating principles are much more consistent," says Courchene, "with the evolving nature of the health care industry in the information era."

“Medicare as a Moral Enterprise: Romanow and Kirby Perspectives,” is the latest *Policy Matters* study to be released as part of the IRPP’s Health and Public Policy series. It is now available on-line in Adobe (.pdf) format on the Institute’s Web site (<http://www.irpp.org>). Please find the summary attached.

The Health and Public Policy series, which is part of the Institute’s NEXUS projects, follows up on the work and reports of the IRPP Task Force on Health Care (released September 2000 and January 2003). The series encourages greater public debate on selected strategic issues related to the findings and recommendations of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (Kirby Commission) and the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada (Romanow Commission). We welcome you to visit the IRPP website (<http://www.irpp.org>) and download related studies under this research initiative.

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