



Presentation Outline

Canada25 is a national youth organization. Its vision is to revitalize the role of youth in the national political debate by providing Canadians between the ages of 20 and 35 with a non-partisan forum to debate and raise the profile of public issues.

Canada25 believes it is positioned to provide the Romanow Commission with a unique perspective on how the healthcare system of today might react and adapt to ensure future accessibility and sustainability. *Canada25* members have researched and discussed a broad range of healthcare issues, and have focused on three important areas to share with the Commission: **Prevention, Health Policy** and **Training** for young Canadian healthcare workers.

Prevention:

The best way to relieve burdens on our healthcare system is to prevent people from becoming ill or being injured. *Canada25*'s presentation will advocate a shift in policy – and funding – from treatment to prevention in the following areas:

Mental Health

- Mental health disorders affect at least 25% of young Canadians
- Only one in nine will receive medical treatment
- The estimated societal/economic burden of mental illness in Canada was \$7.8 billion in 1993, including direct medical costs and indirect costs due to lost productivity and disability

Injury Prevention

- Canadian youth have the highest rate of hospital admission due to injury
- In Canada, there were 204,587 admissions due to injury in 1997/98

Smoking Cessation

- More young men and women 15 to 19 years of age are smoking now than in the late 1980s or early 1990s
- In 1989, 23.5 per cent of females 15 to 19 smoked; in 1996/1997, 31 per cent smoked. The same trend is true for young males
- In 1989, 21.6 per cent of males 15 to 19 smoked; in 1996/1997, 27.2 per cent smoked.

- More than 45,000 people will die this year in Canada due to tobacco use (Health Canada “Go smoke free Web site”)
- In 1991, smoking-attributable health care costs in Canada were \$2.5 billion
- Additional smoking-attributable costs included \$1.5 billion for residential care, \$2 billion due to workers’ absenteeism, \$80 million due to fires and \$10.5 billion due to lost future income caused by premature death

Health Promotion

- Sedentary lifestyles are causing increased obesity in Canada
- According to the CMAJ, (2000;163 (11):1461-2), from 1981 to 1996 the prevalence of overweight increased by 92% in boys and by 57% in girls. During that time, the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled in boys and girls
- Despite these trends, Canadian Governments have cut funding to programs such as ParticipAction. Federal grants to the agency never exceed \$1 million per year, yet its work was estimated to save the healthcare system up to \$2 billion annually

Proactive Healthcare Contact

- *Canada25* is concerned young Canadians are being conditioned to rely on their healthcare system for treatment rather than prevention
- The membership advocates contact with healthcare providers which is designed to maintain and promote health, rather than “restore” it

Health Policy:

To combine the universality of our healthcare system with consistent top quality, *Canada25* believes it is imperative that Canada attract, retain, and utilize the very best healthcare talent possible. Innovation in our health sector is vital to maintaining the distinctive advantage that will attract talent from abroad as well as from within Canada. The organization would like to bring forward four recommendations for achieving these goals (see recommendations).

Training:

Canada25 would like to present recommendations on the following issues affecting young Canadians entering the health care profession:

- Relieving the debt burden of young Canadian doctors, allowing them to make more choices after graduation
- Encouraging a more equitable distribution of doctors
- Encouraging innovative ways to train and empower healthcare workers to take on more responsibilities
- Improving the process of for qualifying international doctors
- Encouraging “life-long” learning in the Canadian healthcare system

Recommendations

Prevention:

Canada25 is concerned about the sustainability of our national healthcare system. As young Canadians, the organization wants to ensure that affordable and effective health services are in place now and in the future. A shift in policy from treatment to prevention would ease the burden on healthcare and improve the quality of life for Canadians of all ages. Our presentation will focus on key areas where investments in prevention will have immediate benefits for young Canadians, save the healthcare system money and pay long-term dividends.

Health Policy:

To attract, retain and maximize Canada's healthcare talent, Canadian healthcare systems must:

- Enable healthcare workers to influence the environment in which they work by:
 - Creating *Electives* where trainees work with health policy analysts or decision-makers to complete a personal assignment. Trainees would develop skills examining an area of policy or legislation, apply these skills in a non-traditional environment and learn how policy is evaluated and implemented
 - Developing health policy *Internships*. Healthcare workers would work in "short bursts" with provincial health ministries and Health Canada. With greater involvement in the process, Canadian healthcare workers will feel more responsible and able to influence change. Policymakers will receive increased front-line input. This cooperation will make policy initiatives more effective.

A "renovated" national healthcare system should also work to recognize, promote and share successful healthcare and prevention programs by:

- Enlisting Health Canada to create and oversee an Internet-based, publicly-accessible network which would allow healthcare professionals and researchers, health ministries and interest groups to identify and share best practices
- Creating opportunities to recognize and promote these best practices across the country and internationally, either through annual awards or media campaigns. Canadians need to recognize the innovation already present in the country and celebrate its potential

To ensure the input of the end user is considered:

- Policymakers need to proactively gather and include patient experiences in the policy process, giving patients a stake in an ongoing process of innovation and change

Training:

In order to attract and retain skilled young workers, a sustainable Canadian healthcare system should relieve the debt burden of young doctors and nurses by further subsidizing their education in exchange for a commitment to remain in the country for a certain period of time. This arrangement could be designed to ensure more equitable geographic distribution of healthcare workers in Canada. The shortage and distribution of skilled doctors could be addressed by creating a better system for recognizing the skills and training of international doctors, and accepting more applicants.

Canada25 believes that “life-long” learning is crucial. A sustainable healthcare system should challenge current roles, and encourage healthcare providers to take on increased responsibilities. The nurse-practitioner concept, for example, could be applied to many areas of healthcare, empowering workers while reducing financial burdens.