

Quebec Report a Hodgepodge of Good and Bad Ideas

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As reported in the Globe and Mail on January 18, a panel of health care experts has some good ideas to which health ministers across the country should attend.

The report, prepared for the Quebec government by the Commission of Study for Health and Social Services, suggested that Quebec create Canada's first publicly funded insurance plan to deal with costs of looking after elderly, disabled people. The report proposes a "loss of autonomy" insurance financed by \$85 to \$100 per year per Quebec taxpayer. The money would pay for home care, nursing homes, and other long-term care facilities.

The report includes further proposals for primary care reform, a system based on round-the-clock delivery of care by doctors working in groups. Patients would be registered with these practices, a system known as "rostering". The report also recommended extending public payment for services such as home care, drugs, and speech therapy for children.

"The fundamental point the report makes is that, aside from physician and hospital services, we are not providing adequate public coverage for health services," said MRG spokesperson Rosanna Pellizzari. "We need to extend coverage for other increasingly important aspects of health care, while reforming primary care."

The reports advice is not all good. In particular the experts suggested scrapping the Canada Health Act provision for public payment of all physician and hospital services.

"The Canada Health Act has proved a durable and useful base of public health care," said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Gordon Guyatt. "We should be extending services, but not by compromising the equitable delivery of physician and hospital care."

If quoted accurately by the Globe and Mail, the Commissions Chair, Michel Clair, fed into a myth by referring to "skyrocketing health costs". In fact, Canada spends approximately the same amount per capita on

health as a decade ago, and spending as a proportion of the GDP has dropped from 10.2% to 9.2%.