



# Submission to the Commission on the Future of Health Care

## Abstract

**NB: Since Caritas Health Group is a major partner in an integrated regional system, Caritas requests that its presentation immediately follow that of the Capital Health Authority if possible.**

### STEP 1 CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Name:** Caritas Health Group  
**Presenter:** Ms. Bev Rachwalski  
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### STEP 2 ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

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**Preferred location:** Edmonton  
**Organization's involvement with health care:** Other: Not-for-profit Sector  
**Scope of organization:** Regional (with a single province or territory)  
**What part of Canada:** Alberta  
**How many branches/affiliates?** Catholic sponsor of Youville Home, St. Albert  
**How many members:** N/A  
**Population of your catchment area:** +900,000  
**How many members of the public served on average during a typical year?** Over 370,000 (includes inpatient, outpatient visits, day surgery, emergency visits, therapeutic services and continuing care)

## STEP 3 YOUR ABSTRACT

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**Focus or theme of presentation:**

Not-for Profit Sector Contributions to Health Care: Innovation and Stewardship

**Outline of presentation:**

- The contributions of charitable organizations were at the heart of growth and development of Canada's health care system from its earliest days.
- Faith-based and not-for-profit organizations pioneered health care in Northern Alberta and continue to contribute to—as well as strengthen and advance—a robust regional system of care.
- In Edmonton, the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) founded the city's first hospital in 1895. The Misericordia Sisters followed in 1900. Their legacy—characterized by a pioneering spirit, resourcefulness, compassionate care, and willingness to tackle even the most daunting problems of the day—lives on in the work of Caritas Health Group.
- Caritas, Alberta's largest faith-based provider of care, works in partnership with the Capital Health Authority to enhance choice and effectiveness in the regional system.
- Caritas is sponsored by the Alberta Catholic Health Corporation and is funded by the Provincial Government through the regional health authority. Caritas has its own corporate entity and voluntary Board of Directors.
- **The Caritas-Capital Health partnership is an innovative arrangement, serving as a successful example of a large multi-faceted not-for-profit provider operating as an integral part of a co-ordinated regional system.**
- Caritas operates 428 beds and offers a full range of acute care services in two facilities, the Grey Nuns and Misericordia Community Hospitals. Another site, the Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre, is home to over 475 residents, making it one of Alberta's largest continuing care facilities.
- **Caritas is shaped by its mission (Healing the Body, Enriching the Mind, Nurturing the Soul) and core values of dignity, respect, compassion, care and concern for all; responsiveness to community and responsible stewardship.**
- For Caritas, health encompasses the spectrum of human experience—including physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and socio-economic factors in human well-being.
- **As a publicly-funded not-for-profit provider Caritas brings to its service role a variety of benefits that enhance effectiveness, accountability and efficiency in the system.**
- As a not-for-profit organization with close community connections and a responsibility to serve people of all faiths and uphold Catholic values and traditions, Caritas builds relationships based on trust and openness. It is accountable to the funder, the regional authority, its donors and partners in the community, its sponsors, and the people it serves.
- The organization enjoys tremendous community support via volunteer human resources and diversified funding sources. Through these connections, the organization has the freedom and the support to explore, experiment and expand to meet emerging needs.
- **Driven by a commitment to social justice and responsibility, Caritas has a strong history of innovation, often times resulting in improved or transformed practice across the region.**
- Examples include specialized child health clinics, world-recognized treatments for head and neck reconstruction, mature women's wellness programs, culturally enriched continuing care programs and more. All of these were launched with community partnership or support.
- An example: Caritas initiated specialized palliative care in 1985 with community funding. Through academic research, care and treatment innovations and community consultation, Caritas laid the groundwork that led to a regional palliative care system of primary care

innovations, home care, hospices and specialized care that has been studied across the globe.

- Years ago Caritas identified and addressed the emerging needs of the terminally ill for compassionate and specialized care and it is ideally situated to continuing this pioneering approach with today's challenges.
- At Caritas, our vision for the future includes innovative work in primary care models. We are also focussed on early interventions for such emerging population health problems as chronic lung disease. In continuing care, we see technological advances as key to helping the aging population maintain autonomy and dignity in their own homes. We have already begun the work.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations:**

- There is an important and significant role for not-for-profit organizations in the provision of health care in Canada.
- Faith-based and not-for-profit organizations, through their emphasis on clearly-articulated missions and values and their ongoing accountabilities to live by these mission and values, continually engage the health care system in an examination of common values and goals, and a common understanding of the kind of society we are seeking to build and want to see reflected in the health system.
- Through an emphasis on the sacredness and dignity of every human life, organizations such as Caritas are driven to recognize and respond to those who are marginalized by their conditions and circumstances.
- Accountable and transparent organizations such as Caritas are able to attract resources in the community through partnerships, volunteerism, and fundraising to address current and emerging needs in innovative ways.
- The Caritas-Capital Health partnership provides an excellent model for regions across Canada. A study of such success stories as the transformation of palliative care in the region clearly shows how innovation and efficiencies in the not-for-profit sector can lead to system improvement and reform supported through ongoing partnership and collaboration.
- Caritas has worked closely with regional planning to target resources and service deliveries to specific populations. This flexibility and adaptability is a tremendous resource to the ongoing and evolving delivery of health care to Canadians within the principles valued by all Canadians.
- Focused on greater service and the common good, Caritas and other not-for-profit organizations bring a continual reinvestment of talent, energy and financial support towards these goals to the benefit of the entire health system.
- Not-to-for-profit organizations are situated to work well in Canada's single-payer health system by providing enhanced choice, access, economic efficiency, a compassionate system, and high quality care. The not-for-profit sector has the capability to deliver expanded services in the future in a transparent and accountable manner.