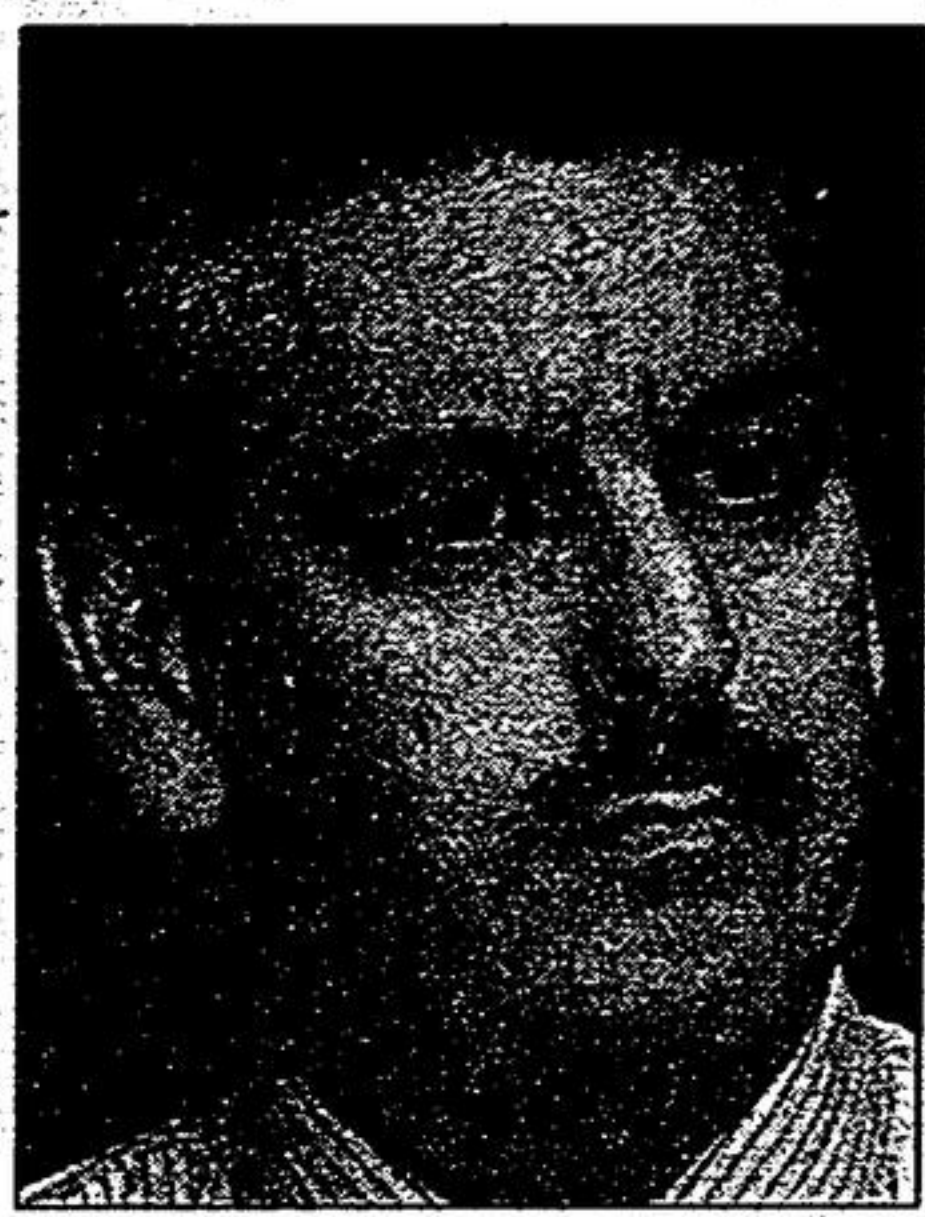




**TESSA BENN-IRELAND:** Educator says immigrants must be better screened for infectious diseases.



**DAN CARRIERE:** Hospital president says access to health care pillar of Canadian society.



**IAN ZATZMAN:** Chief of family practice says doctors burning out while governments bicker.



**HELENA JACZEK:** Medical officer of health says politicians should focus on preventing, not treating, illness.



**FRANK KLEES:** Oak Ridges MPP says province can't sustain current health spending.

# Time to 'break mould' of health care: MPP

BY LISA QUEEN  
Staff Writer

While clearly under stress, Canada's universal medicare system is not in crisis and must be protected from those intent on dismantling it, a panel of York Region health-care experts and consumers advocated in Newmarket Tuesday night.

However, the panel argued a catalogue of improvements is needed to bolster a system under tremendous pressure.

Recommendations were far ranging and included:

- Beefing up health-care funding for communities, such as York Region, that have been short-changed for years;
- Accelerating the process that licenses foreign-trained doctors to work in Canada;
- Considering further privatization of some health services;
- Providing better working conditions and job security for nurses;
- Expanding the home-care network and recognizing the work home-care workers provide;
- Increasing the number of beds in long-term care facilities; and,
- Implementing changes to the way family physicians and other frontline health-care workers deliver medicine.

"I still believe, with qualified reservations, that we have in Ontario and Canada the best health-care system in the world," said panelist Dan Carriere, president of Southlake Regional Health Centre.

"We don't need dismantling of the system, we need reassessment. We have terrific outcomes compared to countries that spend more on health care, including the United States," he added.

Mr. Carriere said he finds it strange that, in the U.S., carrying a

## The Human Factor

A series exploring all things affecting all people in York Region

Staff writer  
Lisa Queen  
reports  
findings of  
health forum



gun is considered a right while access to health care is a privilege.

In Canada, providing universal access to health care is a right most citizens treasure, he said.

"It's a pillar of our society."

Mr. Carriere was one of seven members of the panel put together by the York Region Newspaper Group, including the Economist & Sun, to discuss the future of medicare and offer made-in-York solutions to the challenges facing the system.

More than 50 residents attended the forum, which also featured Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees, regional medical officer of health and Oak Ridges Liberal candidate Dr. Helena Jaczek, Community Home Assistance to Seniors personal and home-support worker Pat Rawson, Newmarket resident and patient advocate Peter Hamilton, Markham children's librarian and educator

Tessa Benn-Ireland and York Central Hospital chief of family practice Dr. Ian Zatzman.

While Mr. Klees insisted the Tories are committed to preserving the fundamentals of the Canada Health Act, including universality and access, he suggested politicians would be foolhardy not to consider more private sector involvement in health care.

Arguing many health services such as X-rays and long-term care are already provided by businesses, he said patients are more interested in getting proper and speedy medical care than in the business structure of the provider.

*"To say the least, I think the health-care system has dealt (patients and their families) a heavy blow."*

"We have to be willing to break the mould of the current system," he said, adding his government has increased funding to the region's three hospitals by 78 per cent over the past seven years, to \$253 million this year, up from \$138 million in 1995.

At the same time, however, he stressed the province wouldn't be forced to consider more privatization of health care if the federal government would increase its share of funding to 50 per cent from the current 14 per cent.

Mr. Hamilton, whose wife died two years ago of breast cancer and whose elderly mother has just been placed in a nursing home, described the frustrations facing family members caring for ill relatives when the system isn't there to help.

"To say the least, I think the health-care system has dealt

(patients and their families) a heavy blow."

He suggested taking a page from the U.S. system that allows patients to pay for extra care.

"In Canada, even if I could pay (for treatment for my wife), I couldn't get the coverage," he said, adding

there is a deep public frustration with the health system.

Pointing to a regional task force report released last month, Dr. Jaczek said York residents have struggled to find care from agencies

See MORALE, page 26.

## Premiers pressure PM on health-care promise

Weeks before the Roy Romanow commission releases its recommendations next month on the future of medicare, Jean Chretien signalled his intention during Monday's Throne Speech to invest more funding in health care.

Mr. Chretien, who delivered his final Throne Speech before stepping down in 17 months, pledged to provide long-term funding needed to address concerns with the system.

He did not put a dollar figure on his promise, typical for a Throne Speech.

Canadians will have to wait until the next budget, expected next February, before they learn the extent to which Mr. Chretien will put his money where his mouth is.

The Canadian Medical Association welcomed Mr. Chretien's renewed commitment to health care.

But provincial premiers slammed the Liberals in newspaper advertisements Tuesday.

"The federal government says health care is a top priority, which raises the question of why they're

only paying for 14 per cent of it," read the ad from the Premiers' Council on Canadian Health Awareness.

Pointing out health care is now, by far, the single largest expense for every province, premiers accused Ottawa of abandoning its commitment to medicare. "Over the years, the federal government has cut its share of health-care funding in Canada from 50 per cent to 14 per cent — forcing provincial and territorial governments to make up the shortfall. And it's a shortfall that continues to grow," the ad said.

"An aging population and increasing costs for drugs and medical technology have put health-care funding under more pressure than ever before."

The premiers promised to continue funding health care.

"We're doing our part. We're spending more than ever before and we'll continue to spend more," they said.

"But we need Ottawa to contribute its fair share. And the sooner that happens, the sooner we can all move forward. The time for action is now."

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