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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Healthcare or Sickness Care

One of the most debated issues of provincial and federal politics is definitely our "healthcare" system. What medications should be covered? Why are the drug prices so outrageous? What professions should be covered? Should Canadians pay something each time they use the system? Why is there so much abuse of the system? How many of the decisions that are made are based on politics instead of good research? These are all questions dear to each taxpayer's heart. I could discuss these questions for hours but I choose not to make these weekly articles my opportunity to get up on the soapbox and spout my personal political opinions.

What I am discussing today is whether or not our existing system, good or bad as it may be, is really "*sickness care*" or "*health care*". I will now ask you a series of questions that you can answer for yourself. Using your answers, formulate your own opinion whether or not we have a health care system or a sickness care system.

- 1) When you think of the "healthcare" system and what it has done for you in the past, is your idea of what it is similar to the true definition? Judge for yourself. The definition of "wellness" is: "*the quality of state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal*". The definition of "sickness" is: "*ill health, illness, a disordered, weakened, or unsound condition, or a specific disease*". Which one most sounds like the reason why you would go to visit your doctor?
- 2) If you had to compare the "sickness industry" and the "wellness industry", which one do you think has the best stronghold on your wallet? Does our healthcare system spend more money treating already existing diseases, ranging from common colds/flu to existing cancerous tumors, or is more money spent on products, treatments, foods, and exercise programs that may help prevent diseases from developing in the first place?
- 3) Does the existing healthcare system appear to be more "proactive" or "reactive" when it comes to your own personal health? For example, how much money does our current "healthcare" system spend on educating the general public about how to successfully prevent osteoporosis or heart disease compared to the money spent on trying to care for you once your first hip fracture or heart attack has occurred?

4) Do you think the multi-billion dollar and politically powerful drug companies are interested in getting you well and keeping you that way? Or, do you think they are more interested in finding new ways to treat the diseases or ailments you already have?

By asking you these questions, it is not my goal to put down the medical doctors or the so-called “healthcare” system they are working in. The medical doctors are overworked and understaffed. The existing healthcare system is really just a very expensive sickness treating system that is not cost effective. For any healthcare system to work well and be affordable, it must have a stronger “wellness” component. As well, the general public must accept more of the responsibility for their personal health.

In amongst all the negativity attached to our government funded health care system, there are signs of change. Unfortunately, it is not coming from our ministry of health. It is coming from the general public. The baby boomers are the wealthiest and most educated portion of our society and they will do and spend whatever it takes to be healthy. It has become apparent to them that they can no longer depend on our current healthcare system to achieve *wellness*. They are educating themselves and seeking help from practitioners presently considered “outside” or “supplementary to” the healthcare system whose beliefs are more in line with their own. The first real sign of this trend occurred last year in the United States when there were more patient visits made to alternative or supplementary practitioners than to medical doctors.

The current healthcare system is now at a fork in the road. It can drastically change and follow the ever-growing trend of wellness care or it can proceed down the road of inefficiency and ever-increasing costs. I cannot predict which way our system will go but the general public seems to already have made their choice.