

**CAPA Steering Committee opposed to:
BC Alternative Model for Accessing Orthopaedic Care**

by: Anne Dooley
December 2003

On November 7th, a joint annual meeting of the CAPA Steering Committee and Arthritis Society advocacy staff took place in Toronto. TAS British Columbia representative caught everyone's attention by delivering a report with supporting materials on the TAS BC alternate model for access to joint replacement surgery.

This model called "Access Now" was developed by the BC Orthopedic Association and TAS to reduce and eliminate waiting lists for joint replacement surgery. The plan, which was launched in September 2002, would permit patients willing to pay privately for surgery to "jump the queue". The patient would pay double the cost of the procedure, thereby covering the cost of surgery for another person waiting in the public queue. This model has been promoted to members of the BC legislative assembly and at arthritis education sessions throughout the province, as recently as this September according to the Vancouver Sun.

The CAPA Steering Committee strongly opposes this model. It violates the principles of the Canada Health Act, shatters the concept of patient equality, takes unfair advantage of vulnerable patients in pain, and exposes the health care system to threats and destruction under the North American Free Trade Agreement. It also undermines the considerable work of CAPA members in support of the Romanow Commission Report on the Future of Health Care in Canada.

The CAPA Steering Committee wrote to the TAS National Board requesting clarification of the TAS-BC initiative. The letter was re-directed to the TAS Senior Management Team for action. The TAS Advocacy Team also communicated their concern to the Senior Management Team regarding the proposed model. The TAS Advocacy staff's main concern was the implication of the model on the values of the organization.

Bill Langlois, the Executive Director of TAS BC, addressed this concern at the November TAS Senior Management Team Meeting, November 16th, 2003.

Mr. Langlois stated that the concept of this model was explored during the year, but was dropped from the agenda because of heated debate. (Results of TAS BC survey: 40% were in favour of the proposed model, 50% were against and 10% would go out of province or leave the country to receive care.) Because access to care models have serious implications for all Canadians with arthritis, CAPA is monitoring the situation.