Chapter 2
The Canadian Health Care System

Canada’s Health Care System
- Canada’s national health insurance system (medicare) ensures that all Canadians have access to quality health care.
- Uses provincial/territorial and federal taxes to pay for care
- Faced with increasing costs, Canadians are re-examining health care spending and priorities.

Evolution of Canadian Health Care
- Originally, individuals paid their own hospital/doctor bills.
- If they could not afford to pay, they went to charity organizations (e.g., Red Cross).
- Great Depression 1930s – many ill and disabled people depended on a family member because they couldn’t afford care.
- 1947 – Saskatchewan had the first public insurance plan covering hospital services.
Evolution of Canadian Health Care (Cont’d)

- 1967 – ten provinces and two territories agreed to provide in-patient hospital care. Costs were split between federal and provincial governments.
- 1972 – insurance extended to cover medical services outside hospital.

Modern Health Care System: Federal Role

- Deliver health care to Aboriginal people, people living on reserves, military personnel, veterans, inmates of federal jails, and members of the RCMP
- Develop and carry out government policy and programs that promote health and prevent disease
- Transfer tax money to provinces and territories to share costs of medical care

Federal Role

- Box 2-3 outlines five principles that must be met in order for provinces and territories to qualify for federal money.
  - Public administration
  - Comprehensiveness
  - Universality
  - Portability
  - Accessibility
- Canada Health Act 1984 clarifies the types of health care services that are insured.
Health Care Reform

- Many challenges to the country’s ability to provide quality health care
- Rural or remote areas face severe shortages of physicians, nurses, and other health care workers
- Long waitlists for surgeries and diagnostic tests
- High prices for drugs and technology

Home Care

- Established partly to save money and partly as a result of technological advances – patients are sent home sooner following hospital procedures

Home Care (Cont’d)

- Canada Health Act 1984 clarifies the types of health care services that are insured.
- Publicly funded home care programs are available.
- PSWs provide most support services for home care.
  - Box 2-4: How Home Care is Governed and Delivered (p. 26)
Modern Health Care System: Provincial/Territorial Role

- Develop and administrate health care insurance
- Finance and plan health care services following the five basic principles in the Canada Health Act
- Pay for hospital and physician costs and some costs of rehabilitation
- Varies across country
- People can purchase extra insurance

Impact on PSW Role

- Home support services often provided by PSWs:
  - Assistance with home management
  - Assistance with ADLs
  - Assistance with taking medications