



For Immediate Release
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Health Coalitions call for Federal Leadership to Defend Public Health Care

(Ottawa) Seven health coalitions, representing concerned Canadians from PEI to British Columbia, are calling for stronger federal action on health care ahead of Monday's opening of Parliament.

Canada's universal, public health care system requires federal vision and leadership. Health coalitions across Canada recognize the federal government's extraordinary contribution of resources and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this time-limited and targeted support does not address the structural inadequacies of federal transfers left by the failure to negotiate a new Health Accord in 2016-17.

Long before the pandemic, health coalitions and others warned that the federal government was underfunding the system and leaving Canadians vulnerable to cuts at the provincial level. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed both the necessity of having a strong public health system, and the devastating consequences of privatization and under-investing in public health care.

Horrific conditions in for-profit long-term care homes have been exposed, meanwhile some provinces have accelerated for-profit privatization under cover of the pandemic. Premiers have advocated for more funding without making commitments, and provinces are expanding privatization by building new private facilities.

In response, millions of Canadians have supported the call to improve care levels, to enforce stronger national standards, and to put an end to for-profit care. That is why any federal-provincial agreement on long term care funding without strings attached to ensure that money goes to improving care, and not to profits, would be unacceptable.

When public health care was first established in Canada, the federal government contributed 50% of the costs to the provinces. Over time, this percentage has decreased, with federal funding currently covering only 22% of the costs of health care. The additional financial responsibility has been left to the provinces, which have failed to varying degrees to provide resources and plan for population needs. The federal government does not face the same financial constraints as the provinces and territories, so it falls on the federal government to use its advantage to strengthen healthcare delivery in Canada.



At this pivotal moment in our nation's history, the federal government must reaffirm its commitment to public health care by taking the following steps:

- Making long-term, substantial increases to the Canadian Health Transfer and negotiating a new Health Accord with the provinces and territories.
- This new funding must come with strings attached. The Health Accord must ensure transparency, and guarantee that federal funding is invested in public health care and is not used for other purposes such as paying down provincial deficits.
- There must be accountability mechanisms to ensure public funds are not transformed into profits through privatization of our health care services.
- A new Health Accord would ensure that people in Canada would continue to access high-quality public health care including universal Pharmacare on equitable terms, based on their needs and not their income, no matter where they live. It would unite the country around our shared vision for public health care, which is based on the principles of equity and compassion.

The coalitions acknowledge the Prime Minister's Supplemental Mandate Letter to Health Minister Patty Hajdu on January 15, 2021, particularly its request to set new, national standards for long-term care, to address health inequities and barriers to care across the country, and to accelerate steps to achieve a national, universal pharmacare program.