

Ministry of Health



Unifor represents more than 30,000 members in the health and community services sectors. This includes more than 10,000 members in hospitals, 14,500 in long-term care, 2,000 in retirement homes, 350 in emergency services and 3,000 in health-related community and social services. Our members work in various areas of the health sector, proudly providing direct care and support to Canadians in need.



Unifor priorities

Canada's growing and increasingly aging population is putting significant pressure on our health care system to meet the current and future health needs of Canadians. Unifor fundamentally supports strengthening and expanding our national health care system in order to meet these needs. Our members who work in health care are people who understand the importance of a strong, universal, public health care system for their families and local communities. And all of our members recognize that our work at the bargaining table helps deliver better quality care to Canadians while improving the working conditions for the people who provide health services.



Specific issues and policy recommendations

Federal health accord

The previous government took an unfortunate course of action by not negotiating with the provinces and territories when the last Health Accord ended in 2014 and unilaterally formulated a federal transfer plan. However, the new government now has an opportunity to reverse course and immediately work with the provinces and territories to develop a new multi-year Health Accord that includes funding commitments and targets, with accountability measures for enhancing and adding services. Canadians are looking to the federal government for leadership in developing a comprehensive Health Accord with the provinces and territories that reflects the growing needs of our aging population. Unifor recommends:

- Fulfilling the election campaign promise to immediately work with the provinces and territories to develop a new multi-year Health Accord.
 - This includes funding commitments and targets, along with accountability for enhancing and adding health services.
- Reversing the unilateral cut to federal transfer funding (slated to begin in 2017) by the previous Harper government and retain the formula from the previous Health Accord until a new one is negotiated with the provinces and territories.



Access to prescription drugs

Accessibility and affordability of prescription drugs is an important element of the health care system. Canadians individually and through their insurance plans spend excess billions of dollars on prescription drugs – a problem that is highlighted by the fact that Canada is the only industrialized country with universal health insurance but no national pharmacare program for its citizens. Several studies and provincial leaders have acknowledged that a national universal pharmacare program, that is publicly funded and administered, would save Canadians and the government billions of dollars annually. Such a national plan would benefit from bulk buying power, lower pooled risk and cheaper administration costs, while providing Canadians with much-needed comprehensive drug coverage. Unifor recommends:

- Establishing a national prescription drug program that is publicly funded and administered that ensures comprehensive and universal access to drugs, while ensuring safe and appropriate use of drugs.
- The government's election platform outlined the possibility of bulk drug buying with the provinces and territories – this can be incorporated into a national program.

Integrated care for seniors

The proportion of seniors in Canada's population is the highest it has ever been, raising the need to ensure that our health care system can support this demographic change. Currently, there is no national strategy to meet the growing health needs of seniors through integrated continuing care services. Such integration involves long-term care infrastructure and services, quality home care availability and supports for respite and palliative care. Integrated care for seniors should be a core element of Canada's public health care system and particular focus should be placed on care for seniors with multiple chronic conditions and diseases. It is only through a national seniors strategy with the support for integrated care that seniors can truly live with dignity.

- Developing a national strategy, including a funding mechanism, to meet the growing health needs of seniors through integrated continuing care services.
 - A strategy should focus on public and not-for-profit systems of care for seniors.
 - A strategy should also focus on integrating care for seniors with multiple chronic conditions and diseases.
- Investments in integrated seniors care include:
 - Long-term care infrastructure.
 - Access to high quality home care.
 - Appropriate supports for respite and palliative care, and informal as well as formal caregivers.

Enforcement

The federal government not only plays a central role in the funding and structure of our health care system, but also in enforcing the provisions in the *Canada Health Act*. A growing portion of health services is being delivered by private, for-profit providers, which undermines the Act and the principles of a public, universal health care system.

- Defend universal single tier public health care.
- Ensure that a national drug program and integrated seniors services are protected under the same principles as in the *Canada Health Act*.

Prepared by: Unifor Research Department

For more information contact:
Unifor Membership Mobilization and
Political Action Department
politicalaction@unifor.org
(416) 718-8493
1-800-268-5763 ext. 8493
Unifor.org

