

# Questions for Candidates

## Federal Election 2015

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*Here are some questions about key issues that, if addressed properly by our next federal government, would improve health care for all Canadians. We have provided the questions and some background on each key issue for your use.*

1. **Will you renew Canada's Health Accord?**

Will you commit to a First Ministers' Meeting on Health Care to renew Canada's Health Accord? That means a meeting to forge an agreement among our provincial and federal leaders to set national goals to improve health care for all Canadians. The Health Accord would also set the funding formula for health care. Will you commit to improving the federal share of health funding?

The current federal government has refused to hold First Ministers meetings & meet with the provinces. Instead Harper announced a plan -- without consultation-- to cut the funding formula for health care starting after this election; a plan that will result in a \$36 billion cut to health care funding over the next decade. (\$36 billion could buy 144 million MRIs or more than 100 entire new hospitals.). The cuts to the federal funding formula will reduce the federal share of health care funding, download the costs to the provinces and will result in cuts and privatization if not stopped.

2. **Will you uphold single tier health care under the Canada Health Act & stop user fees charged to patients by private clinics?**

Will you commit to ensuring that the federal government takes concrete action to stop the private clinics that are unlawfully billing patients, and protect patients against two-tier user fees?

Patients are being charged hundreds - or even thousands - of dollars in private clinics for needed treatments or diagnoses. But under the Canada Health Act, care must be provided equally and fairly, based on medical need not on how much money the patient has. Canadians have already paid for public health care in our taxes and should not be charged extra user fees for needed care. It is the federal government's role to uphold the principles of Public Medicare, but it has done virtually nothing in the face of flagrant violations in which patients are illegally charged thousands of dollars for medically needed surgeries or diagnostic tests. Equal health care for all must be protected by our next federal government. Our money is better spent on care, not profiteering.

3. **Will you commit to creating a public drug program for Canadians?**

Provincial governments across Canada have been willing to work with the federal government to move forward on a national drug program but the federal government has walked away from the table. It makes no sense that patients are covered by public health insurance for surgeries and diagnostics but not for needed medications. This is not a question of affordability. Indeed, many Canadians cannot afford *not* to have a public drug plan. Canada's drug prices are among the very highest of any developed country, and patients hit with high drug bills face real hardship. Carleton University researchers have calculated that a public drug program would actually save more than \$10 billion compared to what Canadians pay now for drugs. Through the power of bulk-buying and improved regulation, a public drug program would better control too-high drug prices, improve drug safety practices, and put money towards needed safe medications for Canadian patients.

4. **Will you improve seniors' care?**

Will you work to create a plan to meet the chronic care and longer-term care needs of Canadians?

Everyone knows that we have an aging population whose health care needs, particularly for chronic (ongoing) care and longer-term care are not adequately being met. People are discharged from hospitals without home care, or with inadequate care. They face impossible waits for long-term care placements, and high user fees for these types of care. It is beyond time that our government take the principles of public medicare and apply them to chronic and long-term care. We need a national plan so that as people age, the care they need will be there when they need it.