

December 9, 2016  
For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

## **As Prime Minister Trudeau meets with First Ministers, Health Coalition calls for both sides to give ground to forge a new Health Accord in the public interest**

Ottawa – In advance of tonight’s dinner discussion on health care between the provincial-territorial Premiers and the Prime Minister, the Ontario Health Coalition called out both sides for their intransigence and advocated a new Health Accord forged in the public interest.

For months, provincial premiers and the federal government have been at odds over funding, with the provinces calling for more and the federal government holding to the funding formula cuts put in place by the Harper government. Health Coalition advocates stressed that both sides need to come to the table with concrete commitments.

The federal government must come to the table with an improved commitment to fund health care to meet the real needs of Canadians. By adopting the reduction in the funding formula that Harper proposed and by tying funding to GDP, the Trudeau government is insulating itself from the impact of population aging on health care costs at the expense of the provinces who cannot afford it, according to the federal government’s own Parliamentary Budget Office. (See the 2014 report of the PBO.)

On the other side, the provinces cannot reasonably demand more money and turn around and cut public health care services, prioritizing corporate tax giveaways over health (as happened in Ontario), or taking the money and then violating Canada Health Act requirements that protect patients against user fees and extra-billing by doctors and private clinics (as in Saskatchewan where private clinics are billing patients hundreds of dollars for diagnostic tests).

“It is in the public interest that both levels of government sit down serious and negotiate a new Health Accord. The deal must include an improved commitment for federal dollars to meet the real health care needs of Canadians or we will see more service cuts and privatization,” noted Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. But the provinces are not off the hook either. “In return, provinces must commit to spending federal funding on improving access and quality in public health care services and not shift them into general revenues while cutting and privatizing services. This is reasonable as both levels of government are accountable to the public.”

The Health Coalition is calling for a new 10-year Accord to include the following:

- The provinces are right to advocate for a six per cent funding escalator so that federal support for health care will be sufficient to restore fiscal balance and to meet the real health care needs of Canadians resulting from economic growth and utilization, population growth and aging.
- The federal government is right to insist on a commitment to uphold and enforce the principles of the Canada Health Act, including the right for patients to access needed medical care on equal terms and conditions without user fees or extra billing. Private clinics are violating the Canada Health Act by charging patients hundreds or even thousands of dollars for diagnostics and surgeries. This drives up costs, takes money and resources out of local public hospitals, and means faster care for the rich and slower care for everyone else.
- Both should make concrete commitments to improve access across the continuum of care, including reducing wait times in public hospitals, as well as improved access to primary health teams and public home- and continuing care.
- Both should re-establish the federal-provincial-territorial working groups on pharmacare and home/continuing care that were abandoned by the Harper government, with the goal of establishing a national public drug program and a plan to meet the health needs of aging Canadians.