



ENGLISH VERSION

Health Coalitions Demand Action: Alberta's Bill 11 Threatens Public Health Care for All Canadians

Dear Prime Minister the Right Honourable Mark Carney & Minister of Health the Honourable Marjorie Michel,

Alberta's Bill 11 *The Health Statutes Amendment Act* creates the legal framework for two-tier medicare. It establishes private health insurance and direct charges to patients for medically necessary health care. It will cause gross inequities in access to health care in Alberta and it threatens public health care across Canada.

The Canada Health Act was written to ensure that all Canadians are provided needed health care on equal terms and conditions, without financial barriers. It is one of our nation's great achievements. Passed unanimously in the House of Commons, it reflects our deeply-shared values of equity and compassion. Obviously, by throwing the door wide open to charging patients for health care, Alberta's new law destroys any right to equality in access to health care.

We -- Health Coalitions representing more than three million Canadians -- stand together to demand that you take immediate and decisive action to stop this threat to our national public health care. The federal government has a responsibility to uphold the Canada Health Act and the shared national values on which our public health care is built.

We must be clear. The new Alberta legislation expressly creates private health insurance and brings in charges to patients for medically needed health care. It will drive the creation of a market for private insurance in Canada, threatening public health care across the country. It removes barriers and risks so that those physicians who want to charge patients for care can do so, and they can at the same time use the public health care system as a safety net to ensure they make the amount of money they want. There are few protections for health planning and no price controls. There is very little that could mitigate the escalating prices, inequities, and loss of access to public health care that this plan to privatize health care will create. It will harm access to care for the elderly and small, rural and northern communities. It will reduce health care for everyone who cannot afford private health care, as well as people with chronic disease and illness whom private health insurance companies deem unprofitable. It is a giant step toward private U.S. style health care.

The evidence is clear. Private health insurance costs more. Employers will face new private health insurance costs, driving up the cost of doing business in Canada. Costs will increase for employers and new costs will be passed on through co-pays and deductibles to employees also. Unions will be pressed into bargaining for health insurance coverage and that will replace wages, pensions and other benefits. People lose their health insurance when they lose their jobs. People will have to pay for health care both through taxes and private payment, adding costs, not reducing them.

Alberta's health privatization threatens Canadian sovereignty, ending national public health care which is foundational to our uniqueness and difference from the United States. It risks the carve out of public health insurance in trade agreements which stops U.S. private health insurance companies from moving into our country.

We are asking you to break your silence on this issue. You cannot be complicit with a plan to privatize our health care. Canadians need you to take action to safeguard our public health care and protect patients from greed and suffering that privatization will create if it is not stopped.

Signatories

Canadian Health Coalition

Friends of Medicare (Alberta)

BC Health Coalition

Manitoba Health Coalition

Saskatchewan Health Coalition

Ontario Health Coalition

Coalition solidarite sante (Quebec)

Nova Scotia Health Coalition

New Brunswick Health Coalition

PEI Health Coalition