



Health Coalitions Call for Increased Federal Health Care Funding and Accountability

Ottawa, December 10, 2020- Canada's premiers are meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to request an increase to federal funding for health care. Health coalitions from across the country support the call for a long-term increase to the Canada Health Transfer (CHT). This funding must be accompanied by a robust accountability framework to ensure that provinces and territories invest this money in public health care and uphold the *Canada Health Act*.

Canada's universal, public health care system requires federal vision and leadership. Millions of Canadians have joined the call for more federal standards, not less. An agreement without strings attached to ensure that money goes to care, and not to profits, would not be acceptable.

Public health care is our best defense against the COVID-19 pandemic and other health crises. However, this system has been eroded through decades of austerity budgets, privatization, and inadequate planning. Even during "normal times," our health care system is at capacity.

When public health care was first established in Canada, the federal government contributed 50% of the costs. 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 COVID-19 pandemic has revealed both the necessity of having a strong public health system, and the devastating consequences of under-investing in public health care. Health coalitions across Canada recognize the federal government's extraordinary contribution of resources and support during the 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.

At this pivotal moment in our nation's history, the federal government must reaffirm its commitment to public health care by making long-term, substantial increases to the CHT 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, guaranteeing that federal funding is invested in public health care and not used for other purposes such as paying down provincial deficits. Needed public funds must not be transferred to profit-taking through privatization of our health care services. The irresponsible finger pointing and politicization of these issues occurring in some provinces is resulting in lost lives and devastating consequences for health care.

A new Health Accord would ensure that people in Canada would continue to access high-quality public health care 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.