

Time to fix healthcare's front door, urges coalition of care providers

March 31, 2021 – Ottawa (ON) – In preparation for the April 19 federal budget, a coalition of healthcare providers is banding together to demand urgent action from the Trudeau Government to improve access to primary care services in Canada through dedicated investments to strengthen primary care.

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA), the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), the Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA), and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) are calling on the federal government to deliver on its commitment to ensure all Canadians have access to a primary care provider.

Recent surveys have shown that Canadians are worried about the shortage of health professionals and their ability to access the care they need. They believe that the federal government should do more to improve health care.

The creation of a Primary Care Transition Fund would bring together family physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, and other health professionals to work as a team to improve both access and care for patients in alignment with a broadly supported vision known as the Patient's Medical Home. Implementing this initiative would effectively address three priorities: access to family physicians and primary care teams, better mental health and seniors care, and improved access to home care.

The federal government has previously committed to improving primary care in Canada through promises made in the 2019 election, in speeches from the throne, as well as in mandate letters that set priorities for government ministers. The time has come to deliver on that commitment, and the coalition stands together to see this pledge become reality on budget day.

QUOTES:

Nearly five million Canadians don't have access to a family physician or primary health team. The pandemic has highlighted many gaps in our healthcare system. We know that we need to urgently attend to the backlog, as well as the rising demand for mental health and chronic disease management services, to name a few. We must ensure our healthcare system is equipped to support Canada's recovery, and that means ensuring access to primary care which is key to supporting the health of Canadians. – Dr. Ann Collins, president of the CMA

Canada's family physicians know firsthand that continuous, comprehensive, team-based primary care is necessary for a healthy population. We are counting on the federal government to invest in stronger community-based care across the country. – Dr. Francine Lemire, executive director and CEO of College of Family Physicians of Canada

Investments in better care are urgently needed to help more people living in Canada age in place. Strengthening and improving primary care and home care will ease pressure on the acute-care system and eliminate gaps in the continuum of care that too often result in older adults landing in the hospital or long-term care. – Tim Guest, president of the Canadian Nurses Association



The health inequities in Canada in accessing physical, mental and social care have been deeply exposed by this pandemic. Canada's recovery must address these systemic inequities, in part, by funding culturally competent community-based care that addresses immediate needs while connecting to ongoing community social, physical and mental health services.

– Joan Davis-Whelan, president of the Canadian Association of Social Workers

A recent global study of the impact of COVID-19 on caregivers revealed that for 64 per cent of caregivers in Canada their primary responsibility is to manage doctors' appointments, compared to an average of 57 per cent in 12 other countries¹. Government must invest in expanding access to primary health care so that caregivers receive the supports they need from our healthcare system. – **Nadine Henningsen, chief executive officer of Canadian Home Care and Carers Canada**

The strengthening of primary care and home care is critical to the successful delivery of healthcare during this pandemic and beyond. A strengthened primary care system enables enhanced collaboration between family physicians and other specialists and enhances integration with secondary and tertiary levels of care to ensure high quality patient care for all.

– Dr. Susan Moffatt-Bruce, CEO of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

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About the Canadian Medical Association

Since 1867, the Canadian Medical Association has been the national voice of Canada's medical profession. We work with physicians, residents and medical students on issues that matter to the profession and the health of Canadians. We advocate for policy and programs that drive meaningful change for physicians and their patients.

About the Canadian Association of Social Workers

The Canadian Association of Social Workers is the national professional association. CASW promotes and strengthens the profession, supports its members, and advances issues of social justice.

About the College of Family Physicians of Canada

The College of Family Physicians of Canada is the voice of family medicine in Canada. Representing more than 40,000 members across the country, it is the professional organization responsible for establishing standards for the training, certification, and lifelong education of family physicians and for advocating on behalf of the specialty of family medicine, family physicians and their patients.

About the Canadian Home Care Association

The Canadian Home Care Association is a national not-for-profit membership association representing home and community care stakeholders from governments, health authorities, administrators, and providers. Through Carers Canada, a priority program of the CHCA, we work to increase recognition and support for caregivers and vital partners in care.

About the Canadian Nurses Association

The Canadian Nurses Association is the national and global professional voice of Canadian nursing. We represent registered nurses, nurse practitioners, licensed and registered practical nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and retired nurses across all 13 provinces and territories.

About the RCPSC

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is the national professional association that pursues excellence in medical education, professional standards, and physician competence. We protect the health of Canadians by helping physicians build skills, knowledge and expertise through lifelong learning and continuing professional development. We accredit the university programs that train resident physicians for their specialty practices, and we administer the examinations that residents must pass to become certified as specialists. In collaboration with health organizations and government agencies, the Royal College also plays a role in developing sound health policy in Canada.

¹ The global study surveyed 9,044 caregivers across 12 countries, with 755 unpaid carers from Canada. The countries participating in the survey were: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Spain, Taiwan, United Kingdom, and the United States.

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