



CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF NURSES UNIONS
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS

MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canada's Nurses Call on Health Ministers to 'Break the Silos' with a new Health and Social Accord.

January 20, 2016 (Vancouver) — Today the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) offered strong recommendations to the country's health ministers, focused on implementing a new Health and Social Accord. At a roundtable briefing, Canada's nurses presented the results of extensive consultations and evidence reviews to twelve provincial health ministers, followed by an open discussion between nurse leaders and ministers. The same recommendations will be presented to the federal government.

"We need leadership, Canadians pay more for prescription drugs than nearly every other developed country, our seniors don't have access to the care they need, and nurses are working millions of overtime hours each year, with no rational plan in sight," said Linda Silas, President of the CFNU. "It's time for co-ordinated action between governments, we need to break the silos in health care and understand that cutbacks at the local hospital, reduced home care services and children who go hungry all impact health status and health care costs. Having only a narrow focus on delivery of health care in hospitals does not go far enough."

In order to support the anticipated First Ministers Meeting on a new Accord, the CFNU invited 50 health care stakeholders to consult on what should be part of a new federal-provincial agreement. The CFNU used these consultations to forge the recommendations presented to health ministers today. While strongly committing to the principles under the *Canada Health Act*, the CFNU has expanded the call for a Health Accord to include a Social Accord, recognizing that talking about the social determinants of health has not led to progress. Coordinated action is needed, now.

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions recommends that First Ministers set a strong course forward for Canada by implementing a Health and Social Accord that includes:

- Stable Federal Health Care Funding (to a minimum of 25% by 2025)
- Coordinated Health Human Resources Planning
- A National Prescription Drug Plan (Pharmacare)
- A Canadian Strategy for Healthy Aging
- Improved Access to Health Services in Home and Community Settings
- Improved Access to Mental Health Services

To advance the health of Canadians, governments should recognize that health systems do not exist in a vacuum. What is required is a better coordination of health and social services, particularly at points of access such as primary health care networks, along with a more integrated approach to health and social policies.

Canada's nurses urge health ministers to work with health care stakeholders in the next few months to prepare for negotiations toward a new Accord. Will our ministers take up the challenges represented by our aging population, our indigenous population's poor health, spiraling drug costs and an increasingly fragmented system and commit to collaborating on items such as national prescription drug plan? Or will they stay on the current path, fiddling around the edges, without confronting the real issues?

Canada's nurses are strongly pushing for coordinated action, a bold vision and clear policies that improve health care outcomes as we monitor the negotiations and continue our work with health ministers.

"We don't believe Canadians will be served if the negotiations are solely focused on money, in this respect I agree with federal Health Minister Philpott's recent statements," said Silas, "but all evidence shows that federal leadership is essential to addressing some of the structural challenges in health, and this includes having the federal government commit to paying its fair share for health care in Canada and using its national mandate constructively. The CFNU looks forward to working with progressive governments in the coming months."

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The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) is Canada's largest nurses' organization representing nearly 200,000 nurses and student nurses. The CFNU has been advocating for national discussions on key health priorities, such as a national prescription drug plan, a comprehensive approach to long-term and continuing care, greater attention to health human resources, and federal government engagement on the future of public health care.

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