

HOT ON THE Hill

Spring 2016



**Canada's
Nurses**
STANDING UP
FOR HEALTHCARE

The Budget Breakdown

On March 22, 2016, the federal government released details of the 2016 budget, including reaffirming the election promise to engage with the provincial and territorial governments to renegotiate a new Health Accord. Canada's nurses released statements welcoming this commitment along with the Liberal's priorities to increase child care benefits, improve immunization coverage, and additional investments for those who need it most, including seniors, Indigenous Peoples, and veterans.

"Over the coming months we expect more movement towards investing in health care as the federal, provincial and territorial governments negotiate Canada's next Health and Social Accord," said CFNU president Linda Silas. "Canada's nurses know the impact of poor health financing – we see and feel the cutbacks happening in our hospitals every day and the lack of home care available to Canadians. Patients and their families suffer. It is time to negotiate a new Health and Social Accord with the provinces and territories, and for the federal government to pay their fair share."

In the weeks leading up to the budget, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) offered clear recommendations during the pre-budget consultation process, focusing on implementing a new 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



Canada's nurses meet with Minister Philpott - propose new Health and Social Accord

On April 4, 2016, CFNU president Linda Silas met with Federal Health Minister Jane Philpott in Ottawa. Silas and Philpott discussed Canada's nurses' ongoing work towards the next Health and Social Accord.

"This was a productive meeting, and I feel confident that this face-to-face with Minister Philpott signals a new era of governments and health care leaders working collaboratively to strengthen our public health care system into the future," said Silas.

This meeting was scheduled to come just a few weeks after the 2016 Federal Budget was released, which included details reaffirming the election promise to engage with the provincial and territorial governments to renegotiate a new Health Accord.

The CFNU used this meeting with the minister to present recommendations to expand on this Health Accord and include the impact of the social determinants of health.

In 2016 it is time to recognize that all government policies must be viewed through a health equity lens, and it is imperative to focus our efforts on a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. Canada's nurses are also calling on all levels of government to implement coordinated health human resources (HHR) planning and Indigenous health strategies.

"In order to truly improve our Canadian health care system we must recognize that there are health inequalities that exist in Canada," said Silas. "Every day people are forced to choose between feeding their families and filling their prescriptions. It is time once and for all to recognize the social determinants of health as federal, provincial and territorial governments move towards Accord negotiations."

Canada's nurses look forward to further positive meetings and follow up discussions with the Health Minister's team in the months ahead.



“With the release of the budget today, it is time for better coordination of health and social services by all levels of government. We must respond to the needs of people whose health is most at risk with an integrated approach to improving the health of Canadians.

Now is the time to negotiate a Health and Social Accord.”

- CFNU president Linda Silas



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The CFNU is calling on all levels of government to come together and implement a Health and Social Accord that will:

- Set a strong course forward for Canada by implementing a Health and Social Accord that includes four priority policies:
 - A National Prescription Drug Plan (Pharmacare);
 - A Canadian Strategy for Healthy Aging;
 - Improved Access to Health Services in Home and Community Settings; and
 - Improved Access to Mental Health Services.
- Establish a staged agreement that includes:
 - Short-term targets to be achieved in time for Canada's 150th Birthday celebrations in July 2017;
 - Medium-term goals to be achieved by 2019 to set Canada up well to enter the 2020s with predictable, long-term and stable funding required to ensure development of robust services and public policy; and
 - A long-term commitment to extend federal funding to reach 25% of health care costs by 2025.
- Support the implementation of these policies through stable funding and coordinated health human resources planning. To improve 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, and a more integrated approach to health and social policies, while maintaining the existing Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer.

Closing the Gap Conference by Upstream

On Sunday April 3, 2016, Canada's nurses sponsored and participated in the first ever *Closing the Gap - Action for health equity* conference in Ottawa.

The event was organized by Upstream - an independent, non-partisan organization seeking to reframe public discussions around addressing the social determinants of health in order to build a healthier society.

This year the CFNU called on the federal government to broaden the call to now include 'social' (Health and Social Accord), and to recognize the impacts of the social determinants of health. The CFNU believes that participating in the Closing the Gap event was an important opportunity to support Canada's leading experts on the social determinants of health. The event was attended by CFNU President Linda Silas, CFNU Secretary Treasurer Pauline Worsfold, UNA 2nd VP Daphne Wallace, NBNU President Marilyn Quinn, and RNUNL President Debbie Forward.

The two-part event featured Canada's leading experts on topics pertaining to the social determinants of health, who presented different ideas and theories of how to equitably improve social conditions that help determine good health.

The first part of the event focused on action for health equity in three areas - at home, in the community and at work, and was hosted by *The Globe and Mail* public health reporter and author André Picard. Speakers included Upstream founder and Saskatoon family physician Dr. Ryan Meili, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Senior Economist Armine Yalnizyan, Executive Director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada Cindy Blackstock, Vice-President, Medical Affairs and Health System Solutions at Women's College Hospital (WCH) Dr. Danielle Martin, among others.

The second part of the event featured keynote addresses from Canada's federal Health Minister Dr. Jane Philpott, and Director of The UCL Institute of Health Equity and author of *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World*, Sir Michael Marmot.

"It was inspiring to be surrounded by Canada's leading experts on the social determinants of health, and to hear different ideas and solutions for how we move forward," said CFNU president Linda Silas. "Canada's frontline nurses know that all government policies must be viewed through a health equity lens if we want to bring forth meaningful improvements to our health care system that truly benefits all Canadians."



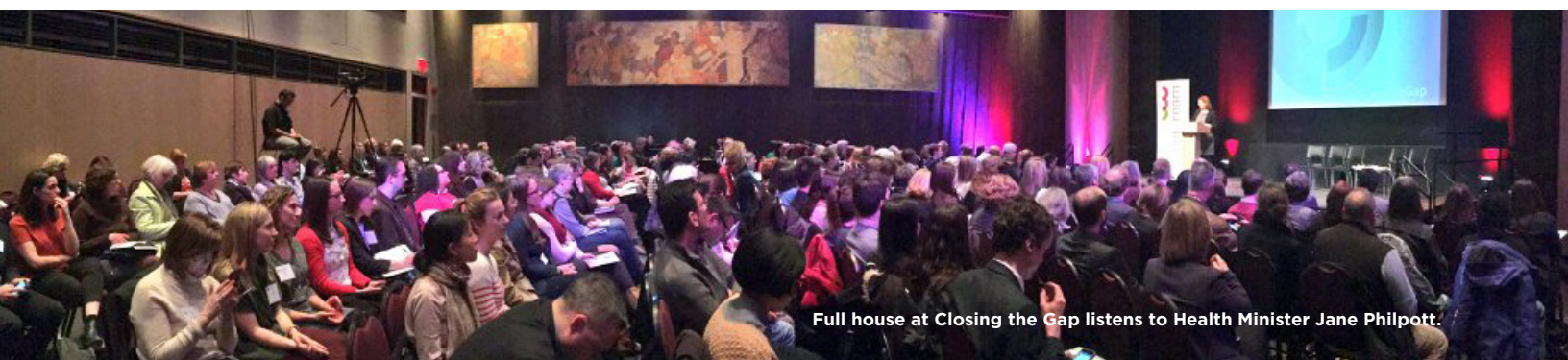
(L - R) UNA 2nd VP Daphne Wallace, CFNU Secretary Treasurer Pauline Worsfold, CLC President Hassan Yussuff, CFNU President Linda Silas, RNUNL President Debbie Forward, SUN President Tracy Zambory, NBNU President Marilyn Quinn.

"Canada's frontline nurses know that all government policies must be viewed through a health equity lens if we want to bring forth meaningful improvements to our health care system that truly benefits all Canadians."

- CFNU President Linda Silas



CFNU Secretary Treasurer Pauline Worsfold with former Health and Welfare Minister and founder of the Canada Health Act, Monique Bégin.



Full house at Closing the Gap listens to Health Minister Jane Philpott.

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)

The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW60) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in March 2016. CFNU president Linda Silas was one of 40 members representing Canada's Trade Union Delegation.

"It was an honour to be part of the Canadian delegation and to join over 160 trade women representing 34 countries at the United Nations Headquarters," said CFNU President Linda Silas. "We came together to address issues, to learn from one another, and to stand in solidarity for all women and girls around the world."

According to a joint statement prepared by the Global Unions to UNCSW60, 70 million women worldwide are represented in trade unions.

The priority theme for UNCSW60 was: "Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development." The session also reviewed the theme of the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. The Canadian Labour Congress hosted a workshop where research findings and recommendations were presented from the work being done to address domestic violence in the workplace.

"It was an honour to be part of the Canadian delegation and to join over 160 trade women representing 34 countries at the United Nations Headquarters," said CFNU President Linda Silas. "We came together to address issues, to learn from one another, and to stand in solidarity for all women and girls around the world."

Other theme areas of focus for the Canadian Trade Union Delegation were income equality and the wage gap, addressing and ending violence against women and girls, providing relief to First Nations children, youth and families, and investing in decent work and good jobs.

The delegation was also addressed by several Canadian Members of Parliament including Minister for the Status of Women, Patty Hajdu, and Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took part in an armchair discussion panel with United Nations Women's Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

"I was proud to represent Canada's Nurses on behalf of the Canadian delegation and to witness my sisters and government leaders bring forward strong ideas and recommendations on behalf of all working women in Canada," said CFNU president Linda Silas.

To learn more about the agreed conclusions from the 60th UNCSW please [click here](#).

Raising our Trade Union Voices @CSW60



Pharmacare Now! A once-in-a-generation opportunity that may be lost.

Canada's nurses message to Minister Philpott

Since the beginning of our universal public health care system, Canadians have studied, demanded and longed for a national prescription drug plan. 2016 represents the best and possibly final opportunity to ensure that Canada finally creates this fundamentally necessary program.

Provincial governments know that Canada needs pharmacare. The Conservatives' neglect of this file forced provinces to work together through bulk-purchasing arrangements which now save Canadians \$500 million per year through negotiating lower costs with pharmaceutical companies. While this is positive, it is a fraction of the estimated \$11 billion that Canada could save with a full pharmacare program. Alongside the provinces is a long list of academics, health care professionals, unions and ordinary Canadians who also see that the current system is not working. Even corporations see the importance of lowering drug costs because they pay for their employees to have these benefits.

Canadians pay the most for prescription drugs outside of the United States. 20% of Canadians don't have their prescriptions covered, and 10% report leaving prescriptions unfilled because of cost. The public therefore carries the cost of patients whose conditions worsen due to not taking their prescription drugs and ending up in hospital with more serious health problems. Nurses and other health care professionals see this first-hand and know the terrible impacts on the patients.

It is very frustrating to those who have been pressing for universal pharmacare, that there has been no action for Canada to join the rest of the world on pharmacare. All other countries which provide universal health care to their citizens include a pharmacare system as well. Canada is alone in covering health care but excluding prescription drugs as though this were not an integral part of treatment.

Fortunately, the opportunity to change this is before us. The change in federal government has meant that our political leaders are finally again negotiating a new Health Accord. Will pharmacare be part of those negotiations? It definitely should be. Provinces are aligned on the need for a prescription drug plan, but the jury is still out on whether this opportunity will be seized by the federal Liberals. The federal health minister has a mandate to lower prescription drug costs and to explore a national formulary that could be the beginning of a pharmacare system, but indications are that the Liberals are kicking this can down the road to possibly promise in a future mandate. The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions will continue to press for action now and will be hosting a Parliamentary Breakfast for MPs and Senators on May 31st so that they can hear from leading experts on the need for pharmacare now.



It is troubling that action could be delayed, and this would be a mistake as the favourable conditions for pharmacare may well not hold. It is especially troubling that the same government that has tasked its health minister with lowering drug costs is contemplating ratifying agreements that would increase drug costs by increasing patent protection for big pharmaceutical companies. The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) are estimated to increase drug costs by 5% and 10% respectively. This amounts to hundreds of millions of extra costs on top of the inflated costs Canadians already pay.

Canadians should be outraged that the previous Conservative government negotiated these deals without consultation, even as they were losing power. They should be equally outraged that the current Liberal government has shown no appetite for reversing

these bad agreements. Though there are international pressures for Canada to ratify these agreements, it is important that Canada take a strong stand that these agreements, as currently written, are not in the overall interests of Canadians.

It is important, however, to remember that despite all these challenges, this moment marks the best opportunity we have to finally achieve a universal pharmacare plan in Canada. The House of Commons Health Committee is studying pharmacare and has a majority of members who seem to favour moving forward. CFNU president Linda Silas is scheduled to present before the Committee and will deliver a strong message for action. Health Minister Jane Philpott has previously clearly stated her support for pharmacare as a physician, and when the CFNU met with the Minister on April 4, we strongly encouraged action. All of this, combined with the mandate given by the Prime Minister to negotiate a Health Accord,

lower drug costs and explore a national formulary suggests the campaign for a universal prescription drug plan has more momentum now than it has ever truly had in the past. Most importantly, this federal government will have strong support across the negotiating table from powerful provinces like Ontario and Alberta as well as little push-back from those ideologically against national programs, because the numbers and evidence for pharmacare are impossible to ignore.

Will all of this amount to Canadians cutting the ribbon on pharmacare? Only if we all continue the pressure and demand that our governments take action, otherwise our children will also face this burden of paying billions more than our counterparts around the world. Now is the time for a national pharmacare plan, and when we seize this opportunity we can save billions that can be reinvested to deal with the uphill challenges we face with our health care system, like our aging population and chronic diseases.



Trade Agreements Threaten Health

Canada's nurses speak out against CETA and the TPP

The federal government recently signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) but claims that this does not mean that the government will ratify the TPP bringing it into force. Both the TPP and the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement with Europe (CETA) have major implications for health care in Canada. Both these agreements were negotiated by the previous Conservative government without public consultation and have been widely criticized.

"When the CFNU met with International Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland, we made it clear Canada's nurses are opposed to both agreements because of concerns for our health care system and patients," said CFNU president Linda Silas. "While it can be argued that these agreements will benefit some industries and harm others, it is clear that under both Canadians will pay hundreds of millions more for pharmaceuticals, each and every year."

Canadians already pay the second highest costs for prescription drugs, and these agreements increase drug costs by extending patent protection and delaying introduction of lower-priced generic drugs. It is estimated that the overall costs of drugs will increase between 5% for the TPP and 10% for CETA.

"It is unacceptable that one in 10 Canadians report not filling a prescription because of high cost," said CFNU president Linda Silas. "It is unacceptable that any federal government would sign agreements that reduce, not increase, citizen's access to medicine they need. This is what the TPP and CETA would effectively do as outlined in two papers produced for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and supported by the CFNU. Canada's nurses believe that it is important, for the protection of our patients, that we take a stand against these agreements," added Silas.

The CFNU believes that rather than agreements that increase drug costs, Canada must implement a national prescription drug plan to ensure reasonable cost and universal access. These trade agreements could be used to challenge any steps taken towards pharmacare as corporations are given the right to sue governments if their profits are at risk.

The House of Commons Committee on International Trade is in the midst of public consultations across Canada. The CFNU has requested to present to the Committee and will use this opportunity to clearly outline concerns with these agreements.

"Increasing costs and reducing access to necessary medications is very dangerous and concerning to Canada's Nurses," said CFNU president Linda Silas. "We will actively work with this government to ensure that these and future trade agreements exempt health care and allow Canada to implement Pharmacare, a national prescription drug plan that would save Canadians billions of dollars every year."

The time for pharmacare is now, and the CFNU is taking that message to politicians and policy-makers through a variety of events and engagements. These include working at the Council of the Federation with premiers, meeting with ministers, presenting at committees and hosting a Parliamentary Breakfast on May 31st.

"The next year, including the negotiations towards a new Health Accord, will be critical for the future of health care in Canada," said CFNU president Linda Silas. "The CFNU will be working hard to ensure that the voice of frontline nurses is clearly heard," concluded Silas.

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- CFNU President Linda Silas



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