

THANK YOU
FRONTLINE HEALTH
CARE WORKERS

**CANADIAN HEALTH
COALITION**
REPORT ON ACTIVITIES
AND CAMPAIGNS

2021



116 Albert St., Suite 300 Ottawa, ON K1P 5G3
613.699.9898
www.healthcoalition.ca @healthcoalition

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2021 CANADIAN HEALTH COALITION **BOARD**

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(CURC)

STAFF

Steven Staples
National Director of Policy
and Advocacy

INTRODUCTION

Dear colleagues and friends,

The Canadian Health Coalition is a one-of-a-kind national collaboration between unions representing frontline workers, community groups, and experts who are dedicated to protecting, defending and expanding public health care.

Since its founding in 1979, the Coalition has been a leading campaign organization for public health care across Canada. If the Canadian Health Coalition did not exist today, we would certainly be trying to build one to address the many urgent issues facing our cherished public health care system.

In 2021, our Coalition played an especially important role for its members. As the pandemic dragged on into another year, we provided a space for our organizations to come together to share experiences, challenges and successes.

Together we developed common demands of governments to deliver on their promises and to put public health care at the top of the political agenda. The coalition educated, engaged, and mobilized many thousands of people to stand together and demand political leaders take action.

I am so proud our small organization reaches far beyond our resources, and is regularly sought out by journalists who want to include the expertise and front-line experience of our members in their health and political coverage.

As I write you this letter looking back at 2021, I can see how much progress we have made. The high level of commitment by our members and the richness of our discussions simply astounds me. I am so grateful for your support.



Following the federal election, in October our Board adopted an ambitious political agenda comprising five important objectives (unordered):

- Increase funding and enforcement of the *Canada Health Act*
- Implement pharmacare
- Legislate enforceable national standards for long-term care
- Stop privatization and remove for-profit from health care, including long-term care
- Eliminate systemic racism from health care

To achieve these objectives, we shall continue to welcome new members and supporters, increase our capacity, and engage our members deeply - because they are the source of our strength and our success.

I look forward to working with our members and supporters in 2022 as we continue to press for an expansion of our public system - including pharmacare, push back against the self-interested privatizers, and profiteers, and build a welcoming, responsive, and accountable health care system that meets the needs of everyone living in Canada.

I wish to thank our Board and Executive of the Canadian Health Coalition for your patience and trust to guide and support the coalition. A big “thank you” for sharing your wisdom, and talents so generously.

Respectfully submitted,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Worsfold".

Pauline Worsfold RN
Chairperson

CAMPAIGNS

“PROTECTING, DEFENDING AND EXPANDING PUBLIC HEALTH CARE”

The Canadian Health Coalition is a leading campaign organization for public health care in Canada. Through research, advocacy, and public education, we work with member organizations, health care providers, experts, and community activists to defend, improve, and expand our cherished universal health care system.



The terrible COVID-19 pandemic has been the most significant health care crisis in more than a generation. In the nearly two years of the pandemic up to the end of 2021, there were two million cases of COVID-19 infections, resulting in the deaths of more than 30,000 people in Canada.

The Canadian Health Coalition has spoken out strongly in defence of frontline workers and to improve our health care system, calling for the following measures:

- Promote urgent health care investments
- Ensure frontline workers' safety
- Resist privatization of health services
- Eliminate for-profit from long-term care
- Ensure racism-free access to health care
- Curb the growing influence of the pharmaceutical industry
- Support global vaccine access

“The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed both the necessity of having a strong public health system, and the devastating consequences of privatization and under-investing in public health care.”

– Joint statement by health coalitions across Canada on January 25, 2021



The Canadian Health Coalition has campaigned for a transformation in care for seniors for many years. The awful impact of the pandemic on those living and working in long-term care facilities, especially those owned by private, for-profit corporations, was the focus of a cross-Canada Day of Action on April 23.

Working with CHC members, we demanded the federal government take the following steps immediately.

- Listen to front-line workers, families and residents to make dramatic changes to long-term care
- Legislate national, enforceable standards for long-term care, including at least 4.1 hours of per day of direct patient care
- Remove for-profit companies from the long-term care sector, focussing on non-profit and public ownership and operation

“The long-term care sector has been dominated by corporate investors who put profits first, and care second. The companies failed Canadians miserably, and now it’s time to put residents, families and workers ahead of investor dividends.”

- Statement by Pauline Worsfold, RN, CHC chairperson, on July 6, 2021



Canada is the only country in the world with public health care and no universal public system for providing prescription drugs.

The Canadian Health Coalition has made achieving a universal, single-payer pharmacare program a central part of its campaign work.

In 2021, we mounted our first-ever virtual national MP lobby, mobilizing 13 teams of 72 volunteers drawn from the ranks of 20 organizations. They met with 25 MPs from five political parties, including two party leaders, two health critics and a Cabinet minister to push the government to implement the 2019 Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare, led by former Ontario Health Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins.

Our efforts caused the Prime Minister to mandate Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos to, “continue engaging with willing provinces and territories towards national universal pharmacare.”

“The Economic and Fiscal Update and Budget 2022 are opportunities to demonstrate in a concrete way that the Liberal government will keep its promise on pharmacare. Canadians hope to see a firm financial commitment of - at a minimum - \$3.5-billion towards essential medicines coverage as recommended by the Advisory Council.”

- Canadian Health Coalition statement with 20 organizations and experts, December 8, 2021

ENFORCING THE CANADA HEALTH ACT AND CONFRONTING PRIVATIZATION

Health care funding became a top public policy issue following a request from the provinces and territories to increase the Canada Health Transfer from the federal government. But not enough attention was paid to enforcing the *Canada Health Act* and ensuring provinces meet their obligations to its five principles: public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility.

The coalition urged caution in the federal government’s response to this demand for more funding, since the provinces and territories are expecting the funding increases to be without conditions.

“Health Minister Duclos must ensure any increases to federal health transfers to provinces improve services and programs, including pharmacare and long-term care.”

- Statement by Pauline Worsfold, RN, CHC Chairperson on October 27, 2021





PUBLIC HEALTH CARE AND THE **FEDERAL ELECTION**

When the Liberals plunged the country into an election in 2019, the Canadian Health Coalition seized the opportunity. We conducted research on party commitments regarding health care, and other issues, provided research to CHC member groups and researchers, worked with partners on initiatives and joint statements, amplified members' election work, and engaged with the media and journalists.

We were called upon frequently by journalists from the *CBC*, *Canadian Press*, *Global*, and the *Toronto Star* to help cut through the election spin and provide a reality-check on the promises made by politicians.

“ Clearly, the failure of private, for-profit, long-term care facilities as exposed during the pandemic has to be corrected. And the NDP is addressing it by phasing out long-term care in favour of the other two (kinds): public or non-profit. Conservatives seem to want to go in the opposite direction. And the Liberals don't seem to be addressing the elephant in the room, which is the for-profit providers.”

— Steven Staples, National Director of Policy and Advocacy, CHC, in the *Toronto Star*, August 23, 2021



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