

TOP PRIORITY

FASTER CARE

10 STEPS

to ensure we get more and
better care—faster

1. More health professionals.
2. A national home care program.
3. A national pharmacare plan.
4. Better nursing home care for the elderly.
5. More public investment in dental care and oral health promotion.
6. A national mental health strategy.
7. Accurate information and evidence to make better decisions.
8. Primary care reform and expansion.
9. Greater focus on prevention, promotion and public health initiatives.
10. Better chronic disease management.

Over the next several months we will be distributing leaflets setting out more details on each of these 10 crucial steps.



national
union

*NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC
AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES*

- B. C. Government and Service Employees' Union
- Health Sciences Association of British Columbia
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta
- Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union
- Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union
- Ontario Public Service Employees Union
- Canadian Union of Brewery and General Workers
- New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees
- Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union
- PEI Union of Public Sector Employees
- Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees

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The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of the Public Services International.



TOP PRIORITY
Short wait times

STEP #1
Hire more health professionals

MORE
GREAT HEALTH CARE
WHY ARE WE
WAITING?



The greatest
Canadian idea
ever

Our Medicare is the triumph of values and economics.

It provides all Canadians with equal access to care on the basis of need, not wealth or privilege or status. Our Medicare is a vital aspect of our shared citizenship—what every Canadian can rightfully expect wherever they live, whatever their income. It is the clearest reflection of who we are and what we value.

But more than that, our Medicare is, quite simply, a good and sensible idea that works.

Health spending in Canada is on par with most countries in the Western world and is substantially lower than in the United States. And yet we devote a smaller portion of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to health care today than we did over a decade ago.

Our health outcomes, on almost every critical measure, are among the best in the world. A large majority of Canadians are highly satisfied with the quality and standard of care Medicare gives them.

Over the last 40 years our Medicare has served us very well. Our Medicare is worth celebrating and defending.

But there is room for improvement. It is up to us to press for and win those improvements and still stay true to the idea and ideals of a universal, public health care program—our Medicare!



M E D I C A R E

TOP PRIORITY

Short wait times

OUR MEDICARE JUST DOESN'T WORK FAST ENOUGH.

Too many Canadians are waiting too long, too often for the critical services they need.

Shorter wait times are essential: for our individual health; and for the health of Medicare itself.

A focus on reducing wait times can stimulate broad constructive reform and improvement in how our health care system is organized and ensure health care dollars are spent effectively.

Plus, a return to short wait times will restore high levels of public confidence and support for the system overall.

Reducing Medicare wait times must be our top priority.

STEP #1 Hire more health professionals

A PRINCIPAL CAUSE of long wait times is plain enough: a shortage of health professionals.

Our demand for health care services keeps increasing. But our health professional workforce is

aging and static or shrinking. We simply need to train, recruit and work hard to retain more health professionals.

The more we put it off, the more we put off and hamper any real chance of reducing wait times to the levels we all need, want and expect.

A REAL CRISIS, NOW

The health professionals shortage is a crisis that's already arrived. This means there is no time to lose.

It will take time to train, recruit and retain an adequate health professional workforce. But success depends on our being honest about how serious the shortage is—and doing something about it now.

NOT JUST DOCTORS AND NURSES

The severe shortages include doctors and nurses AND all the highly-skilled health professionals who deliver life-saving diagnostic, clinical, rehabilitation, pharmacy and emergency services. To succeed, we must develop a strategy to address the shortage of all health professionals, not just doctors and nurses.

NATIONAL PLAN A NECESSITY

Provincial governments acting independently are only likely to make this problem worse. There's a brisk migration of health professionals across the country, and provinces often attract their health professionals at the ex-

pense of neighbouring provinces. To succeed, we must work together, on a national level.

FOR-PROFIT STILL NO ANSWER

A parallel for-profit system will not create one new health professional and will actually drain scarce health professionals out of the public system and exacerbate the wait time problem. To succeed, we must find solutions within the public system.

MUST BE MADE-IN-CANADA

Accrediting and integrating foreign trained professionals is part of the solution, but it is not the magic bullet. Health professional shortages are a global problem and our own lack of planning must not be an excuse to poach health professionals from other countries struggling with their own shortages. To succeed, we must develop a comprehensive made-in-Canada plan.

A three-part solution

Canada can build an adequate supply of health professionals by taking three important steps.

BETTER WORK-LIFE

First, we must improve the work environment and job satisfaction for our current health professional workforce.

This means making creative investments in financial and non-financial incentives and putting an end to the overreli-

ance on part-time and casual work.

BETTER USE

Second, we must make better use of the health professionals we have presently.

This means moving forward more aggressively with primary care reform, moving to team based care, reassessing the scopes and patterns of practice, and enabling health professionals to practice to their full potential in order to make the best use of skills.

BETTER PLANS

Third, we must plan better for future health needs.

This means we must increase enrollment spaces in health professional schools, and reduce high tuition costs, to train more professionals where there are severe shortages.

But this also means moving away from intermittent planning and quick fix solutions. We must ensure that health human resource forecasting is based on population demographics and health needs.

And it means provinces must stop working on this issue in isolation and accept that a national approach is required. The lack of a national approach has resulted in destructive competition rather than cooperation.

Long wait times are a real problem. But real results on reducing wait times are possible once we hire more health professionals.

10 STEPS TO **FASTER CARE**

