

CMA submission

CMA 2023 pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

October 6, 2022

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: Increase the Canada Health Transfer

Swiftly and collaboratively work with provinces and territories to achieve a new, long-term and sustained commitment to increasing federal health funding via the Canada Health Transfer, starting in Budget 2023. It is critical that new funding be transparent and accountable and that it effectively deliver results for all in Canada.

Recommendation 2: Sustain federal leadership for pan-Canadian integrated health human resources planning

Deliver targeted investments to address Canada's escalating health human resources emergency:

- \$300 million to help keep health professionals in the workforce
- \$300 million to relieve the immense administrative burden that health care workers face
- \$50 million to improve workforce data collection across health systems and establish a national workforce agency to promote evidence-based health human resources planning
- \$4.5 billion for targeted mental health funding, and as part of that commitment create a long-term pan-Canadian mental health strategy for health care workers

Recommendation 3: Scale up collaborative, interprofessional primary care

Deliver on the \$3.2 billion commitment to expand access to primary care, and as part of that commitment specifically:

- dedicate \$1.2 billion to a Primary Care Integration Fund to support the adoption of the Patient's Medical Home model; and
- allocate \$2 million to assess the interprofessional training capacity of faculties of medicine and health sciences.

Recommendation 4: Enable the adoption of a pan-Canadian licensure model to *expand* the mobility of medical professionals and virtual care to improve access to health care in Canada

Dedicate \$3.9 million to a fund for provinces and territories to develop a “regional” or “multi-provincial/territorial” licence that includes enacting the necessary enabling legislation.

Recommendation 5: Bolster public health capacity

Invest \$500 million in sustained efforts to bolster public health capacity.

Recommendation 6: Advance reconciliation in Canada’s health system

Support Indigenous organizations’ health priorities and implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls’ (MMIWG) Calls for Justice and Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy.

Recommendation 7: Support the implementation of the National Adaptation Strategy

Provide sustained investments to fully implement the Government of Canada’s National Adaptation Strategy in support of ensuring Canada’s movement toward low-carbon, resilient health systems by 2050.

Introduction

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) respectfully submits the recommendations outlined in this brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance for consideration as part of the pre-budget consultation for Budget 2023.

As the national organization representing physicians, we are acutely aware of the health system crisis in this country. Targeted federal investments in Budget 2023 are fundamental to improving health care delivery and ensuring the system does not entirely collapse.

Recommendation 1: Increase the Canada Health Transfer

The COVID-19 pandemic starkly exposed and widened the cracks that have long existed in health systems across the country, pushing them to the brink of collapse. The increasing reduction and closures of primary care practices and emergency departments, massive surgical and diagnostic imaging backlogs and growing health inequities, coupled with a rapidly aging population who will require increased care demonstrate the dire need to inject sustained funds to stabilize these health systems.

Despite these pressures, the Canada Health Transfer is expected to decline as a share of health spending over the next decade. With provincial and territorial (PT) health care spending expected to grow at an average annual rate of 5.2% and federal health transfers expected to increase at an average annual rate of only 4% under the current escalator, health care spending needs are unsustainable.¹

As such, the CMA is strongly recommending that the federal government swiftly work with PTs to reach a new, long-term and sustained commitment to increasing the Canada Health Transfer. It is critical that this new funding be transparent and effectively deliver results by improving health care in targeted, shared priority areas² with an agreed-upon accountability framework.

Recommendation 2: Sustain federal leadership for pan-Canadian, integrated health human resources planning

The pandemic has taken a toll on everyone, but it has been unrelenting for health care workers, with already elevated burnout levels doubling among physicians.³ Record numbers of Canadian health workers report facing harassment, feeling depleted and distressed and leaving their profession entirely. It is critical that those who have dedicated their professional lives to caring for us be urgently and effectively taken care of, which requires ongoing leadership by the federal government to support pan-Canadian, integrated health human resources planning. This would include delivering the following targeted investments:

- **Keeping health professionals in the workforce:** Committing \$300 million over three years to PTs for comprehensive student loan debt relief measures and incentives supporting retention of health care professionals in areas of urgent need (e.g., critical care; rural, remote, Northern and Indigenous communities).
- **Relieving the increased administrative load that health care workers face:** Committing \$300 million over three years through a federal fund to support jurisdictions to improve the well-being of health care workers through access to administrative supports in primary and secondary care settings.
- **Improving workforce data collection across health systems and establishing a national workforce agency to promote evidence-based health human resources planning:** Committing \$50 million over four years to first enhance health workforce data standardization and collection processes across jurisdictions and subsequently support the establishment of a centre of excellence via an existing agency (such as the Canadian Institute for Health Information) to centrally house the data and support jurisdictional planning efforts.
- **Developing a strategy to support the mental health of health workers:** Delivering on the \$4.5 billion commitment to deliver targeted mental health funding, and as part of that commitment establishing a long-term pan-Canadian mental health strategy for health care workers.

Recommendation 3: Scale up collaborative, interprofessional primary care

Everyone deserves equitable, timely access to care. Lack of access to primary care is a critical issue in Canada, where it is conservatively estimated that 5 million people do not have a family physician or primary care team. Immediate investments in strengthening primary care will contribute to improving the quality and appropriateness of patient care, lowering health care costs (e.g., through a greater focus on prevention and early treatment, which reduces hospital admissions), and promoting a healthier population.

The CMA recommends that the federal government deliver on its \$3.2 billion commitment to support the rapid expansion of access to high-quality primary care. As part of this commitment, the CMA specifically recommends:

- dedicating \$1.2 billion over four years to a one-time Primary Care Integration Fund to support the adoption of the Patient's Medical Home model; and
- allocating \$2 million to assess the interprofessional training capacity of faculties of medicine and health sciences.

Recommendation 4: Enable the adoption of a pan-Canadian licensure model to *expand* the mobility of medical professionals and virtual care to improve access to health care in Canada

The CMA recommends that the federal government support reducing interjurisdictional barriers to the mobility of health care workers and support an expanded use of virtual care with a multi-jurisdictional or single licensing system. This will improve access to health care by creating an environment where physicians can readily provide care to those who need it, no matter where they live. It will support the filling of locums,¹ particularly in rural, remote, Northern and Indigenous communities, which would improve continuity and quality of care and create greater flexibility in physicians' practice, reducing workplace stress.

With the increasing mobility of the Canadian population and the advent of virtual care there is significant demand and opportunity to alleviate inefficiencies and barriers in health care delivery for any PT that adopts legislation to support a multi-jurisdictional licence. As such, the CMA recommends that the federal government:

- dedicate \$3.9 million to a fund for PTs to develop a "regional" or "multi-provincial/territorial" licence that includes enacting the necessary enabling legislation.

The Atlantic provinces have taken the initiative to direct regulators to develop an Atlantic regional licence. This funding would be timely.

The CMA can provide access to evidence and expert advice and can coordinate stakeholder participation to modernize the licensing of medical professionals in Canada. With federal and CMA support and assistance, a model of pan-Canadian licensure can evolve to support better health care for patients, the system and physicians.

¹ A physician who fulfills the duties of a physician who is absent on a temporary basis or who fills a role required by a hospital or practice that is short-staffed.

Recommendation 5: Bolster public health capacity

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the fundamental role that public health plays in preventing illness and keeping communities healthy and safe. Leading the pandemic response has had a significant impact on public health care workers' health and well-being; many are rapidly burning out. The sole focus on pandemic response has created an extensive backlog of other critical public health services, such as childhood vaccination and opioid crisis response.

The CMA commends the funding announced in Budget 2022 to detect and respond to public health emergencies and recognizes it as an important first step to bolster public health capacity. The CMA is recommending that the federal government build on these investments by providing an additional \$500 million in Budget 2023 for the Public Health Agency of Canada to:

- build a robust public health workforce by providing sustained investments in training and skills enhancement to support the retention and recruitment of the workforce and ensure there is sufficient surge capacity in crises;
- enhance research and evidence around public health systems to implement critical lessons learned and support future pandemic prevention and management; and
- develop best practices for providing timely, accurate, consistent and accessible public health crisis communications and addressing health misinformation.

Recommendation 6: Advance reconciliation in Canada's health system

Indigenous Peoples in Canada face inequities in accessing health care because of a wide range of systemic barriers, including colonialism and racism. These barriers have led to disproportionately poorer health outcomes in comparison with the non-Indigenous population in Canada.

To help address these health inequities, the CMA recommends that the federal government:

- in the spirit of true collaboration and partnership, invest in the health priorities Indigenous organizations outline in their recent pre-budget submissions, including increasing data collection, building a continuum of care from pre-birth to death for First Nations,⁴ eliminating tuberculosis in Inuit regions by 2030⁵ and supporting Métis settlements so they can continue delivering critical health services to their communities;⁶ and
- further accelerate its commitments to implement the TRC's Calls to Action, the National Inquiry into MMIWG's Calls for Justice and Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy.

Recommendation 7: Support the implementation of the National Adaptation Strategy

Climate change has been described by the World Health Organization as the greatest threat to health of the 21st century. Concerted efforts are urgently needed to mitigate the health impacts of climate change and enhance health system resiliency in Canada.

This is why the CMA recommends targeted investments to support the implementation of the Government of Canada's inaugural National Adaptation Strategy to ensure Canada moves toward achieving its target of low-carbon, resilient health systems by 2050. It is recommended that the federal government commit to measuring the carbon footprint of Canada's health systems, developing metrics to establish baseline measures and targeted actions to reduce emissions, in addition to reporting yearly on progress.

Conclusion

The CMA is calling for the above strategic investments in Budget 2023 to urgently address Canada's health care crisis and lay the foundation for a robust health system moving forward.

The CMA welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the federal government to deliver concrete results and improve health outcomes for all people in Canada.

¹ Deloitte, CMA. Measures to address health system challenges: review of Canadian, provincial and territorial 2022 budgets. 2022. https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/2022-09/CMA_System_Funding_2022_Report.pdf

² Ibid.

³ CMA 2021 National Physician Health Survey. 2022. https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/2022-08/NPHS_final_report_EN.pdf

⁴ 2022 Assembly of First Nations' pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. <https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-2023-AFN-Preliminary-Budget-Submission.pdf>

⁵ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami pre-budget submission 2022. <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ITK-pre-budget-submission-2022-FINAL.pdf>

⁶ Written submission for the pre-budget consultations in advance of the upcoming federal budget. [MetisSettlementsGeneralCouncil-e.pdf \(ourcommons.ca\)](https://ourcommons.ca/MetisSettlementsGeneralCouncil-e.pdf)