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-Ottawa, ON

Canadians Expect Governments to Put Children First

Recently, Canadian Premiers hosted a news conference requesting increases from the federal government to the Canada Health Transfer to address the growing crisis in healthcare service delivery. The Premiers echoed a call to action featured in a joint statement issued by Children's Healthcare Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and the Canadian Association of Pediatric Nurses, for a First Ministers Meeting between Canadian premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada.

Children's Healthcare Canada and the Pediatric Chairs of Canada support the call for increased investments, further collaboration, overcoming jurisdictional constraints and identifying shared priorities towards addressing the health system crisis. But missing from this discussion is the health and well-being of Canada's 8 million children and youth. We must first acknowledge that Canada has had a longstanding crisis in children's health and we need to make children and youth a priority in our country.

To truly address the Canadian healthcare crisis, governments must prioritize "right-sizing" the healthcare systems serving children with a strategic, pan-Canadian plan. One that will address the crisis today and provide a blueprint for the future. This will require immediate action to build capacity in children's hospitals to meet the demands of a cohort of very sick children, but also across the continuum of care including primary care. It requires a commitment to sustainably increase investments and strengthen policies that measurably improve children's health outcomes in the longer term. This includes investments in physical and mental healthcare services but also social services and education. We need increased training for highly specialized healthcare providers to meet the evolving needs of a growing population of children and youth. We also need a commitment from provincial governments to work closely with the federal government to ensure we have a predictable and reliable supply of safe and effective essential medicines for kids and to develop meaningful targets and timelines to improve children's health and well-being in Canada.

UNICEF Canada's 2020 report card revealed that Canada ranks among the countries with the best economic, environmental, and social conditions for growing up, but the poorest health and wellbeing outcomes for children and youth.

This crisis in children's health requires collective action and urgency. Everyday matters in the life of a child. We have the means to create urgent change, all we need now is the will.