

November 18, 2022

Ottawa, ON-

A Call to Action for Canada's Kids

As Canada's federal, territorial, and provincial Ministers of Health met for their first face-to-face meeting since 2018 to discuss priorities in healthcare, children's hospitals and community partners across the country experienced a critical surge in admissions of children and demand. The convergence of healthcare workforce shortages, a particularly difficult respiratory virus season, COVID-19, increased mental health admissions and longstanding backlogs for surgical, child development and diagnostic interventions has overwhelmed child and youth healthcare systems within both hospital and community-based settings.

The current crisis in child and youth healthcare represents both a challenge and an opportunity for learning. Children's Healthcare Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) and the Canadian Association of Paediatric Nurses (CAPN) are calling on governments to move beyond jurisdictional constraints, identify shared priorities and work collaboratively towards addressing the health system crisis impacting Canada's eight million children and youth. We call upon governments to convene a First Ministers meeting, between Premiers and the Prime Minister, and engaging the Chief Nursing Officer to build a plan to address the children's healthcare crisis, serving as a first-step towards restabilizing our healthcare systems.

Today, in advance of National Child Day, we are providing governments with a vision for child and youth healthcare (consistent with priorities defined by Inspiring Healthy Futures) that prioritizes the needs of today and anticipates the demands of the future to deliver optimal health outcomes, specifically:

- Develop a health human resources strategy which includes a focus on the highly specialized skills and experience required to deliver healthcare to children and youth;
- Scale up infrastructure to "right-size" child and youth healthcare systems (in both children's hospitals and the community) to meet the needs of a growing population of children and youth in Canada;
- Build an integrated, cross-sector, cross-jurisdictional child and youth health data strategy;
- Enhance access to primary care and consulting pediatric services across Canada to support care close to home;
- Increase home care and pediatric respite supports for children with medical complexities, including investments in pediatric rehabilitation facilities to improve the flow of patients;
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- Develop collaborative, integrated care models across the full continuum of children's health care, including ensuring appropriate community resources, follow ups and referrals are available and accessible to reduce the risk of readmissions to hospitals;
- Increase capacity for early intervention and community-based mental health services, including directing 25-30% of funds from a Canada Mental Health Transfer specifically for children and youth;
- Establish a list of critical medications for children in Canada; establish strategic reserves of these essential over the counter and prescription medicines; and, implement a pediatric rule in Canada to improve access to safe and effective medications for children and youth.
- Leverage global partnerships to learn how international jurisdictions are managing pediatric healthcare capacity challenges and developing responses to emerging healthcare priorities.

Canada's population of children continues to grow. Investing in child and youth health and healthcare today will improve health outcomes, reduce health system utilization downstream and contribute to a thriving economy tomorrow. Together, Children's Healthcare Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Canadian Association of Pediatric Nurses urge federal, territorial and provincial leaders in Canada to work together to resolve the current crisis in children's healthcare, develop a new vision and commit resources to measurably improve the health of Canada's children and youth.

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