



Council of the Federation tackles Health Sustainability in preparation for discussions with the federal government

VANCOUVER, July 22, 2011 -- As in many countries around the world, Canada's health care systems are facing increasing pressure as a result of changing demographics and more advanced treatments, as well as the evolving needs and expectations of its users.

Having primary responsibility for health care, provinces and territories are best placed to address the challenges and opportunities within their health care systems. Health care continues to occupy an increasingly larger share of provincial and territorial budgets.

Premiers are ensuring that provincial and territorial health systems are increasingly more patient-centred and sustainable. In particular, provinces and territories are:

- shortening wait times for key procedures;
- finding efficiencies;
- improving access to primary care; and,
- emphasizing healthy living, which will improve quality of life.

Premiers acknowledged the Prime Minister's commitment in the recent federal Speech from the Throne to continuing the 6% escalator on the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) while working collaboratively to renew the Health Accord and to enter into a separate agreement with the Government of Quebec regarding the implementation of the renewed Health Accord. Premiers agree that increases in CHT funding should not be financed by reducing other major transfers.

Premiers agreed to meet again early in the new year on an integrated approach to sustainable health. Premiers will work together on identifying key principles that should govern a new agreement on health care with the federal government. Their discussions will also focus on innovations to modernize health care services that will bring savings to be reinvested in health care systems. Premiers directed their government departments to work together to support their discussion in early 2012.

Premiers also discussed progress on two voluntary initiatives that they began last year; the pan-Canadian alliance for medical equipment and supplies, and for common drugs, and on clinical practice guidelines. Premiers are committed to work together, where appropriate, to reduce costs and improve patient care by continuing to pursue opportunities through the alliance. Participating provinces and territories are successfully negotiating access to some of the most costly drugs in the world. Provinces and territories are using their combined buying power to collectively negotiate on drug pricing and are committed to accelerating this work.

Over the last year, provinces and territories have worked with health care practitioners and experts to assess how to overcome barriers related to the quality, coordination and use of clinical practice guidelines. Health ministers have agreed to collaborate on clinical practice guidelines, focusing on 3 to 5 specific ones where better care and cost savings can be achieved. This winter, interested stakeholder groups and governments will be participating in a summit on improving the evaluation and dissemination of clinical practice guidelines.

Territorial Premiers also look forward to an early discussion with the Prime Minister on an extension of Territorial Health System Sustainability Initiative, which expires March 31, 2012.

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For more information:

Nina Chiarelli

Government of British Columbia

250-387-0793

Cell: 250-216-8426

nina.chiarelli@gov.bc.ca