



# Media Release

For immediate release

## Great Canadian Healthcare Debate

### Health Leaders make national, affordable, supportive housing strategy for seniors their top priority

#### Alternatives to acute care in hospitals urgently needed

VANCOUVER (June 13, 2017) – The nation’s health leaders have chosen the development of community-based housing and treatment alternatives for seniors as the area most urgently in need of attention by federal, provincial and municipal governments and policy-makers in order to address the growing needs of Canada’s senior population.

The development of a “National Affordable and Supportive Housing Strategy for Seniors,” focused on the provision of supportive, community (whether assisted, congregate, long-term care or home) living, emerged as the top priority of voters following the third iteration of the Great Canadian Health Care Debate held in conjunction with the National Health Leadership Conference (NHLC) in Vancouver, British Columbia, June 12-13.

The annual exercise, which last year called for vast improvements in the provision of quality health care to indigenous peoples, is designed to identify the health care system’s most pressing need. Emerging as this year’s top priority, with the support of 53% of health leaders, was the resolution sponsored by Amy Porteous, Vice President of Public Affairs, Planning and Family Medicine at Bruyère Continuing Care, urging ministries of health, infrastructure communities to move with a strategy to de-hospitalize the existing system. With an estimated 2.4 million acute-care hospital days being used by elderly people with chronic conditions who would be better-served through expanded community-based living models, Porteous argued the system could save millions of dollars by freeing-up acute care beds, while reducing exposure to hospital-acquired infections. She argued that governments should put such a strategy in place by 2018.

The first runner up, with 28% of the vote following the debate, was a resolution sponsored by Carol Fancott, Director of Patient Engagement at the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, which urged hospitals to jettison visiting hours and allow family members to become involved in overseeing the treatment of their loved ones. The second runner up (19% of the vote) was a resolution sponsored by Mimi Lowe-Young, former CEO of the Alzheimer’s Society of Canada and current Health Systems Policy and Governance Advisor, which urged the development of a national dementia action plan by 2019.

“The spirited and substantive debate that health leaders engaged in was the kind that legislators should be having in legislature across Canada and in the House of Commons” said Bill Tholl, President and CEO of HealthCareCAN, the national voice of healthcare organizations and hospitals. “All three motions were extremely timely, very well developed by the sponsors and focused on making a good system better.”

“The debate provides health leaders with a platform to drive system-wide changes and improvements to healthcare services,” said Ray Racette, President and CEO of the Canadian College of Health Leaders. “The result of the debate showed that developing a national affordable and supportive housing strategy for seniors was the most important strategy to advance. During the debate there was recognition that having patients and families as partners in health, and creating a national dementia strategy for Canada were closely connected to this work.”





*NHLC is the largest national gathering of health system decision-makers in Canada, including representatives from health regions, authorities and alliances; hospitals; long-term care organizations; public health agencies; community care; mental health and social services; government, education and research organizations; professional associations; and consulting firms and industry. More than 700 health leaders attended this year's event. For more information, visit [www.nhlc-cnls.ca](http://www.nhlc-cnls.ca).*

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