

A call-to-action to create meaningful and sustainable change for Canada's healthcare workforce.

June 7, 2022 – The Canadian healthcare system has experienced unprecedented pressure on its workforce over the last two years. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing workforce issues and led to increasing burnout, and retention challenges. Longer working hours, resource constraints, and personal risk have significantly worsened and had a devastating impact on workforce wellbeing with some studies citing that over 60% of Canadian doctors, nurses and other healthcare professions were reporting severe burnout by spring 2021. ⁱ

As we emerge from the pandemic, health system employers and leaders, regulators, educational institutions, professional associations, patients, and governments need to come together to transform the health system into one that serves the needs of healthcare workers, patients, and their families and caregivers. An essential component of this work will involve assessing and redesigning the longstanding health system structures that have created the workforce crisis as we see it today.

On June 6th and 7th, 2022 HealthCareCAN and the Canadian College of Health Leaders co-hosted the National Health Leadership Conference, which is the largest national gathering of health system leaders in Canada. This annual conference provides a forum to debate, share strategies, and solutions on the most pressing health system challenges. This year's theme was critically focused on the health human resources of the future and the NHLC's signature session, the Great Canadian Health Policy Dialogue focused on actions to address the workforce crisis.

As a result of this year's session, we the hospitals, organizations, professions, and patients, together call upon the federal government to implement five identified sustainable long-term solutions that address the key root causes of the health workforce crisis:

- 1. Models of Care:** We call upon the federal government to work with key health system stakeholders including provincial and territorial governments, professional associations, and regulatory bodies to implement and scale team-based care delivery models. These models should be supported by scope of practice standards and interprofessional education.
- 2. Recruitment and Retention:** We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to take leadership in the development and coordination of a national HHR strategy. As part of the national strategy, focus should be placed on investing in making disciplines more attractive, improving working conditions, and clarifying career pathways, particularly for personal support workers / healthcare aides, physicians, and nurses.
- 3. Data and Workforce Planning:** We call upon the federal government to fund and empower a body with input from the provinces and territories to build a standardized pan-Canadian minimum HHR data set to ensure better and more consistent information is used for proactive planning and decision-making around education, training, and models of care.
- 4. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):** We call upon the federal government to provide funding supports to foundationally embed EDI curriculum within educational institutions in order to better equip our healthcare workers with the skills and knowledge required to serve Canada's diverse patient populations.



5. Wellness: We call upon the federal government to take leadership and fund province- and territory-wide strategies to address workload burden to improve the work-life balance of our healthcare workers. This should include the redesign of administrative tasks, scopes of practice, and models of care that can optimize workload and reduce burnout.

The time to fundamentally shift the systemic structures that have enabled the workforce crisis is now. It is critical that we begin working toward creating a sustainable and thriving workforce in Canada and provide it a safe and inclusive workspace, which will in turn lead to higher quality of patient care and health outcomes.

We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to coordinate a First Ministers Conference on Health with healthcare providers, leaders, healthcare and educational organizations, regulators, and patients in order to begin meaningful discussions on how to implement these actions. We recognize we have a role to play in driving the way forward and supporting the government mandated solutions. We are united and committed to supporting this call-to-action to transform the way we recruit, retain, support and plan for the Canadian healthcare workforce.

¹ Maunder R.G., Heeney N.D., Strudwick G., et al. (2021). Burnout in hospital-based healthcare workers during COVID-19. *Science Briefs of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table*. 2021;2(46). <https://doi.org/10.47326/ocsat.2021.02.46.1.0>