

THE COLLEGE OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
OF CANADA



LE COLLÈGE DES
MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE
DU CANADA

Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

Pre-Budget 2015 Consultations

July 18, 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) represents over 30,000 members. The College is the voice of family medicine in Canada and advocates on behalf of its members to ensure high quality in the delivery of care. Education is a key element of our mandate, and the CFPC establishes standards for the training, certification and ongoing education of family physicians; it is responsible for accrediting postgraduate family medicine training in Canada's 17 medical schools.

On behalf of our family physician members and their patients the CFPC offers this brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance's deliberations leading to Budget 2015. Our recommendations focus on **child and youth health, home care, and the Patient's Medical Home**. Federal leadership and investment in these recommendations is crucial to achieving an overall reduction in health care spending and supports a key goal as presented by FINA for these budget consultations: "Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training".

Child and Youth Health

Investments in child and youth health have been shown to produce positive long-term outcomes throughout people's lives.

Establish a National Child Strategy
Eliminate child poverty by 2020
Renew the 2006 agreement on child care
Ban the advertising of unhealthy foods to children under the age of 12

Home Care

Many people living in Canada with ongoing health issues or complications receive institutionalized care, thereby separating them from their homes and communities. While care in an institutional setting can be entirely appropriate, the CFPC advocates for a broader array of options including home care.

Establish a National Home Care Strategy
Reinstate dedicated funding for home care
Ensure adequate income support for seniors

Patient's Medical Home

The Patient's Medical Home (PMH) is the CFPC's solution to improve care for all in Canada. The vision is that every person in Canada will have access to a family practice/primary care setting that serves as their medical home. The PMH puts the focus on patients by enhancing participation in access to care, ensuring better prevention and wellness, and improving health outcomes.

The Federal government should move to strengthen and support primary care in Canada through: 1) sufficient physician and health care provider resources, and 2) support for the infrastructure and governance to promote the Patient's Medical Home model nationally.

INTRODUCTION

Through investments in programs that target vulnerable populations within Canada, the federal government can demonstrate leadership, set and uphold national standards, and provide adequate funding to providers and programs looking to develop, guide and deliver our health care.

CHILD AND YOUTH HEALTH

Investments in child and youth health produce positive long-term outcomes throughout people's lives. Currently, out of 30 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, Canada ranks 22nd in overall child health and safety and 27th in child obesity. Federal investment in early childhood development and the percentage of children in regulated spaces is one of the lowest amongst Canada's counterparts in the OECD. Family physicians see many of the social determinants of health impacting children and youth. Early childhood development studies find that quality of life and the social environment during childhood has a significant impact on both social and physiological development of children. Social determinants of health, especially poverty, play a significant role in forming these environments and must be addressed.

The CFPC urges the federal government to establish a **National Child Strategy** that will lead the provincial programs through setting national standards. The strategy should:

- Create a robust mechanism for collection of data on the health of children and youth, including important areas such as early childhood development and mental health
- Set standards based on the data collected
- Provide appropriate leadership and support to ensure care providers across the country are properly equipped to meet the goals set.

Current lack of standardization leads to a patchwork provincial approach with great discrepancies between provinces in service availability.

Children living in poverty are at high risk for poor health outcomes. We encourage the government to **support eliminate child poverty by 2020**. The end of child poverty was supported unanimously in the House in 1989 and the CFPC asks that this issue be revisited with the same level of support.

Affordability of child care is a barrier for many Canadian families. We urge the government to **renew the 2006 federal/provincial/territorial commitment on child care** that was supported and signed by all First Ministers.

Finally, child obesity is a health concern for all health care providers. To reduce the consumption of unhealthy foods we ask that the federal government **ban the advertising of unhealthy foods to children under the age of 12.**

Children are Canada's future and investing in their well-being is investing in the well-being of our country.

Recommendations – Child and Youth Health

- Establish a National Child Strategy
- Eliminate child poverty by 2020
- Renew the 2006 agreement on child care
- Ban the advertising of unhealthy foods to children under the age of 12

HOME CARE

Many people living in Canada with ongoing health issues or complications receive institutionalized care, thereby separating them from their homes and communities. While care in an institutional setting can be appropriate, the CFPC advocates for a broader array of options including home care. Since home care is not considered a “medically necessary” service under the *Canada Health Act*, publicly funded home care programs vary greatly across the country in terms of eligibility, scope of coverage and user fees.

A federal Home Care strategy would highlight the importance of home care as means to maintain independence and dignity. Seniors would benefit from the opportunity to remain in their homes longer. Reduced reliance on hospital care would in turn lead to reduced waiting lists for hospital beds and would result in potential cost savings as care delivered in the community, especially preventative care, has been shown to be more cost-efficient.

Dedicated home care funding was a part of the Health Reform Transfer with \$16 billion dedicated specifically to this area between 2003-2008. We encourage the federal government to **reinstate dedicated funding for home care.** The specific distribution and allocation of these funds would need to be determined in partnership with provinces and territories.

In addition to the Family Caregivers' Tax Credit and tax exemptions for home care services, we recommend **enhancing programs that ensure adequate income support for seniors**, especially those living at risk of poverty and financial instability.

With the proportion of people in Canada aged over 65 expected to increase significantly in the near future, it is critical that the federal government take steps to ensure a positive and empowering environment that addresses their health needs.

Recommendations – Home Care

- Establish a National Home Care Strategy
- Reinstate dedicated funding for home care
- Ensure adequate income support for seniors

PATIENT’S MEDICAL HOME

The sustainability of Canada’s health care system depends on ensuring a strong foundation of primary care and family practice. Access issues, changing demographics, and the lack of institutional and community support for patients with chronic health conditions can lead to inefficiencies and be costly. To address the issues of health care at the core of health care delivery, systems for family physicians and patients must be strengthened.

International research provides evidence of the correlation of access to effective family practices with better population health outcomes.ⁱ A strong and high-performing primary healthcare system with an essential role played by family physicians has the potential to deliver better health care for the population as a whole, including those with chronic diseases.^{ii,iii}

The Patient’s Medical Home (PMH) is the CFPC’s solution to improve care for all in Canada. The vision is that every person in Canada will have access to a family practice/primary care setting that serves as their medical home. The PMH puts the focus on patients by enhancing participation in access to care, ensuring better prevention and wellness, and improving health outcomes.

Through federal government support, every family practice can become a PMH, offering comprehensive, coordinated, and continuing care to patients through a family physician working with health care teams. Teams may involve physically or virtually linked nurses, other specialists, and other health care providers depending on the needs of the patient community. The PMH is where patients can present and discuss their personal and family health concerns and receive a full spectrum of care. Relationships between patients and family physicians and other health care workers are developed and strengthened over time, enabling the best possible health outcomes for each person, the practice population, and the community being served.

The PMH reflects and responds to the changing needs of populations in Canada. It also reinforces the physician–patient relationship and the importance of the [Four Principles of Family Medicine](#). Furthermore, child and youth health can be enhanced and home care services can be linked to and better coordinated with a PMH.

The PMH brings the above elements to enhance the delivery of primary care, bridges the transitions between primary and secondary care, and foster better integration; therefore helping to improve the health and health care for all in Canada.

Finally, the PMH in particular and primary care in general would see the following through robust federal government support:

- *Timely Access*: reduces waits in family practice by better use of teams and [same-day scheduling](#)
- *Health Promotion*: focuses on wellness and chronic disease management
- *Value for money*: patients with own family physician as a regular care provider have lower rates of hospitalization and better health outcomes^{iv}
- *Sustainability*: better allocation of resources and funding, and recognizes usage patterns such as a need for greater supports for home care
- *Efficiency*: invest in Canadians' health and improve access e.g. in the early years of life, reduce strain on other parts of the health care system

To achieve their objectives, Patients' Medical Homes will need the support of the federal government through both leadership messaging and support. This must include the assurance of resources for core practice components such as electronic medical records and the establishment of the legal and systemic framework for implementation. Stakeholders including governments, the public, family physicians, other medical and health professions and their organizations, should support and participate in establishing and sustaining Patients' Medical Homes across Canada.

Recommendation – Patient's Medical Home:

- The Federal government should move to strengthen and support primary care in Canada through: 1) sufficient physician and health care provider resources, and 2) support for the infrastructure and governance to promote the Patient's Medical Home model nationally.

CLOSING REMARKS

The CFPC continues to advocate on behalf of our members and their patients to help improve primary care. We believe that by investing in both the beginning and the end stages of people's lives – that is through child and youth health and home care – the federal government will witness reduced costs across the board in both health and social services.

By improving the health of Canadians through the Patient's Medical Home model, there will be fewer demands on the health care system, quality of care will be advanced, and we can work together to foster an efficient and effective health care system.

ⁱ Starfield and Shi, "The Medical Home, Access to Care, and Insurance."

ⁱⁱ Alan Katz, Richard H. Glazier, and Janani Vijayaraghavan, *The Health and Economic Consequences of Achieving a High-quality Primary Healthcare System in Canada – "Applying What Works in Canada: Closing the Gap,"* Improving Primary Healthcare in Canada (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, January 2010), <http://www.chsrf.ca/Programs/PrimaryHealthcare/ImprovingPrimaryHealthcareInCanada.aspx>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hollander et al., "Increasing value for money in the Canadian healthcare system."

^{iv} Starfield and Shi. (2004). The medical home, access to care and insurance: a review of evidence. *Pediatrics*, 113(5), 1493-1498; Hollander, M.J., Kadlec, H., Hamdi, R., & Tessaro, A. (2009). Increasing value for money in the Canadian healthcare system: New findings on the contribution of primary care services. *Healthcare Quarterly*, 12(4), 30-42.