



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

HEALTH ACTION LOBBY (HEAL) DISSATISFIED WITH FEDERAL BUDGET

OTTAWA, February 28 – The Health Action Lobby (HEAL) responded to Tuesday's Federal budget with disappointment. While HEAL acknowledges the merit of new funding for a number of vulnerable populations, the coalition of 36 national health and consumer associations is concerned this second consecutive budget that is silent on ways and means to protect and strengthen Canada's health care system. HEAL warns that funding for coordinated health human resource planning is needed urgently in order to secure the future well-being and health of Canadians.

HEAL strongly supports the funding announcement for seniors struggling on fixed incomes. New budget targeting mental health and funding for the Aboriginal community are also viewed by HEAL as good steps.

However, the absence of new budgetary direction and funding for coordinated health human resource (HHR) planning is short-sighted given the access problems resulting from current and growing health care personnel shortages. "The sustained and growing problem of health personnel shortages is reaching crisis proportions in Canada," says Pamela Fralick, HEAL Chair. "Recognizing that the responsibility for a pan-Canadian HHR plan sits at the Federal level, HEAL once again reminds the Government that Canadians need a stable and self-sufficient health system that can respond to their needs. In other words, Canadians want access to the right health provider at the right time in the right place."

The blueprint for a pan-Canadian HHR strategy has already been produced by Federal, Provincial and Territory Governments, in consultation with key stakeholders. "We hope that the plan to stabilize and modernize the healthcare workforce has not been shelved," adds Fralick. "It is essential that HHR planning not be allowed to lie fallow, especially in the absence of any other dedicated Federal health care funding that might assist other levels of Government to strategically address urgent HHR planning priorities.

Today's budget suggests Federal investments in HHR planning and other primary health care initiatives are not forthcoming. "This position is not acceptable," concludes Fralick. "On behalf of all Canadians, HEAL's members call upon the Harper Government to act toward future guarantees for patient access to quality health services. Current wait time initiatives are not enough."

HEAL brings these urgent health provider issues to Government in order to stimulate further debate and action on health for all Canadians.

The Health Action Lobby (HEAL) is a coalition of 36 national health and consumer associations and organizations dedicated to protecting and strengthening Canada's health system. HEAL represents more than half a million providers and consumers of health care in Canada.

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