

**December 14, 2021**

**TO:** The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health  
**CC:** The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Kamal Khera, Minister of Seniors

Dear Minister Duclos,

Congratulations on your appointment to cabinet during the 44th government of Canada.

The Council of Canadians brings people together through collective action and grassroots organizing to challenge corporate power and advocate for people, the planet and our democracy. In this minority parliament, our 150,000 supporters have tasked us with pushing for change on issues that matter to them. We issue you this mandate letter on their behalf.

Canada's public, universal health system has been a strength of our communities for decades. However, successive federal and provincial government cuts jeopardize this essential system, putting our collective wellbeing at risk. During your ministry, you must invest in this system to strengthen it while further expanding health coverage to all phases of life and life-saving medicines. The pandemic has shown us that our collective health is directly dependent on access to preventive care and medicines. Fortunately, you are in a position to take bold leadership on these critical issues.

You must protect the health system and its core principles, rejecting pressure to privatize services. Recent provincial attempts to address surgical backlogs and clinical care through the private sector jeopardize these standards, which are the foundation ensuring all people in Canada can maintain a basic level of health. As minister, you must ensure that any increases to federal health transfers are attached to national standards, holding provinces and territories accountable to improved services and programs.

You must support a comprehensive intervention into the ongoing racism against Indigenous peoples within health care systems. Recent reports from British Columbia lead the way in diagnosing the problem and clarifying steps to address it, including accountability and education for health care workers and administrators, and addressing the lack of Indigenous leadership in health care sectors and policymaking. Anti-Indigenous racism across health care contributes to disproportionate suffering for these communities. Until this is addressed, Canada cannot claim full universal and accessible access in Canada's health care systems. You must track data related to racialized experiences within health care and take concrete steps to address this issue across the country.

You must ensure that long-term care and homecare services are strengthened through direct financial support dependent on meeting national, public care standards and working standards. The COVID-19 pandemic hit residents of long-term care homes and homecare particularly hard because decades of austerity left these individuals uniquely vulnerable to transmission. Private homes, in particular, saw a disproportionate number of deaths and transmission from COVID-19.

These homes must be held to enforceable national standards, defined in the public interest, and not led by corporate industries. This should include regular and unexpected inspections, appropriate hours of care for each patient, and unionized, good work for staff providing this care. In the context of long-term



care and homecare, the wellbeing of residents and workers is interconnected. By ensuring this workforce, often consisting of racialized, newcomer women, has high quality jobs you can address one aspect of the gap in pandemic recovery that has hit racialized women and communities hardest while also strengthening the care for long-term and homecare residents.

In Ontario, families watched the provincial government remove their right to hold long-term care owners accountable for the unnecessary deaths of their loved ones when Premier Ford passed legislation disallowing families from taking owners to court. This, combined with ongoing investments in private homes and accreditation processes led by industry groups, leaves us worried that responses to the pandemic will deepen our risk in the future by further entrenching care in private hands and power. Instead, you must extend public health care to encompass care at all phases of life.

You must take concrete steps towards a national, universal pharmacare system by authorizing a first round of essential medicines and fully funding that first round by at least \$3.5 billion. As you know, Canada is the only western democracy with a universal health system that does not have some form of public pharmacare. Too many families are still forced to choose between paying for food or medicines. You must approve a list of essential medicines for coverage and provide the full budgetary commitment necessary to cover that implementation across the country.

As successive COVID variants have shown, without global vaccine access communities across the globe will continue to suffer from the pandemic, leaving all of us perpetually vulnerable to new breakthroughs and lockdowns. You must work with your colleagues to support a TRIPS Waiver and allow vaccine technology and manufacturing information to be shared and replicated. We cannot rely on the benevolence of powerful pharmaceutical companies or of wealthy countries to share this technology. It must be enforced through international agreements and commitments to global wellbeing.

As Minister of Health, you are in a unique position to address each of these critical issues. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ravi Joshi  
Co-Executive Directors



Christina Warner