



CANADIAN FEDERATION  
OF NURSES UNIONS  
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE  
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES  
ET INFIRMIERS

## Checklist for Strengthening Health Care in Canada

Health care in Canada has been a public good for over 40 years. As a result, nurses and other health workers have been able to provide high quality care to the vast majority of the population and public health care expenditures have been maintained as a stable proportion of gross domestic product. Nurses in Canada stand firmly behind the public health care model enshrined in the Canada Health Act and are opposed to privatization in any form.

1. Fully engage nurses, patients/residents/clients, their advocates and other health care providers in the design, planning and delivery of health care. This is the only means by which the diverse health systems across the country may be adequately responsive to needs.
2. Reject a profit-driven approach to health care. The evidence shows that it increases costs, reduces equity, and compromises quality. It also shifts costs away from governments and onto the ill. We need to bend the cost curve in health care for all, not just governments. After all, sharing risk across the largest population is the most economical option.
3. Embrace changes that improve patient outcomes and population health at reasonable cost; avoid so-called innovation that doesn't add value or save money; and reject changes that do not respect the principles of the *Canada Health Act*.
4. Ensure that the federal government plays a leadership role through enforcement of the *Canada Health Act*, adequate funding, and coordination of improvement efforts. Health is not only a provincial jurisdiction. Governments should share knowledge and learn from each other. The federal government must share responsibility, risk and costs with provincial and territorial governments.
5. Increase transparency and accountability as it is key to quality improvement and health equality. Good information results in good decision-making and there is a need to produce comparable, accurate, comprehensive reports on health system performance. Common indicators to measure outcomes as well as inputs and outputs are required as transparency and accountability drive improvement.
6. Improve social equality in Canada as it is a major component of building a healthy society. Nurses on the front lines see the consequences of growing poverty and inequality. Governments at the federal and provincial/territorial levels need a "whole of government" approach to address social determinants of health.

7. Make decisions based on evidence. For example, decisions providing the right provider for the right patient in the right place must be evidence-based so that staffing reflects the needs of patients/residents/clients. Evidence-based decision-making is a smart investment in safe care. Appropriateness of care includes the provision of optimal patient/resident/client care as well as a healthy work environment for all health workers. The object is to match patient/resident/client needs with staff expertise within a continuum model. For patients/residents/clients, and nurses and other care providers, health care services must be seamless and safe. Fragmentation of care worsens the experience for patients/residents/clients, their families, and their care providers.
8. Develop a culture of safe staffing in health care workplaces across the continuum of care. A large volume of literature now makes an incontrovertible case for the link between working conditions and caring conditions. Changes at the workplace should be evaluated based on their contribution to continuity of care and worker retention.
9. Strengthen public health, primary health care, long-term care and home care within the public health care system, in addition to bolstering acute care services where needed. The lack of integration, coordination and investment beyond acute care settings increases negative outcomes and system costs. Erosion of public spending in each of these crucial areas of health care has resulted in the growth of for-profit health care services and, in some cases, sheer neglect, to the detriment of both patients/residents/clients and our communities.
10. Create a national pharmacare program to control costs, reduce inequalities in access to essential medicines and to improve health.