

# TOP PRIORITY FASTER CARE

## 10 STEPS to ensure we get more and better care—faster

1. More health professionals.
2. A national home care program.
3. A national pharmacare plan.
4. Better nursing home care for the elderly.
5. More public investment in dental care and oral health promotion.
6. A national mental health strategy.
7. Accurate information and evidence to make better decisions.
8. Primary care reform and expansion.
9. Greater focus on prevention, promotion and public health initiatives.
10. Better chronic disease management.

Over the next several months we will be distributing leaflets setting out more details on each of these 10 crucial steps.



**national  
union**

### *NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES*

- B. C. Government and Service Employees' Union
- Health Sciences Association of British Columbia
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta
- Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union
- Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union
- Ontario Public Service Employees Union
- Canadian Union of Brewery and General Workers
- New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees
- Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union
- PEI Union of Public Sector Employees
- Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees

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The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of the Public Services International.



**TOP PRIORITY** Short wait times

**STEP #2** Create a National Home Care Program





The greatest  
Canadian idea  
ever

Our Medicare is the triumph of values and economics.

It provides all Canadians with equal access to care on the basis of need, not wealth or privilege or status. Our Medicare is a vital aspect of our shared citizenship—what every Canadian can rightfully expect wherever they live, whatever their income. It is the clearest reflection of who we are and what we value.

But more than that, our Medicare is, quite simply, a good and sensible idea that works.

Health spending in Canada is on par with most countries in the Western world and is substantially lower than in the United States. And yet we devote a smaller portion of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to health care today than we did over a decade ago.

Our health outcomes, on almost every critical measure, are among the best in the world. A large majority of Canadians are highly satisfied with the quality and standard of care Medicare gives them.

Over the last 40 years our Medicare has served us very well. Our Medicare is worth celebrating and defending.

But there is room for improvement. It is up to us to press for and win those improvements and still stay true to the idea and ideals of a universal, public health care program—our Medicare!

# M E D I C A R E

Medicare must be expanded to cover all home care treatments and services.



HOME CARE is an important component of the modern health care system. For some it is help with basic household tasks; for others it is complicated medical procedures offered in the home; for still others it is various physical and emotional therapies — and more.

Most Canadians strongly feel that, whenever possible, looking after sick people in their own homes is preferable to institutional care. It's better socially; it's better for the patient's mental and spiritual health; and it makes good economic sense.

Increased home care services can also help ease the wait time problem for people needing an acute hospital bed. For some patients, being provided home care will mean that a hospital bed is made available for someone who needs it.

Medicare must be expanded to cover all home care treatments and services. It makes no sense to guarantee public coverage of medically necessary services provided in hospitals, but to provide only partial coverage or no coverage when those same services are provided in the home.

Home care is an efficient and cost-effective way to deliver many health care services. Research indicates that for some

patients home care can cost less than half of a stay in a hospital.

### Quality health care and good value—what more could we want?

Unfortunately, what we get is a patchwork of programs and services. The provinces are at different stages of development in home care. The methods of payment and the criteria for eligibility vary widely.

Too often people who could benefit from home care services are kept in hospital because there is a lack of services available.

Workers in home care, overwhelmingly women, want to provide the best care possible for their clients. But low wages, long hours, erratic schedules and little support have made the profession simply not viable for many. Attracting and keeping skilled workers is a serious problem — one that can only be solved when home care workers receive the same respect and treatment as other health care workers.

The lack of federal government leadership has resulted in aggressive corporations moving quickly to take over. In many provinces, non-profit home care providers have been driven away by provincial governments favouring low-wage commercial providers.

But experience has shown that privatization: doesn't produce substantial cost savings; leads to lower wages, increased staff turnovers, and poorer quality service; and for-profit companies are likely to reduce staff training to increase profits, thus reducing the quality of the service.

We face a double challenge: first, to overcome government reluctance to add home care to our overall health care system; second, to avoid the perils of a privatized home care delivery system.

The 2002 Romanow Report proposed a process for a national home care program — but did not bring all the provincial services into a national system. Our efforts to have home care included in the Canada Health Act have been largely ignored.

### What is needed is fundamental change

What is needed is a coherent national strategy that is publicly administered and provided with sufficient money and staff to offer necessary home care services.

It's time for a National Public Home Care System.

We can only count on ourselves to make it happen!

10 STEPS TO **FASTER CARE** 