



POLICY *Brief*



REPAIRING HEALTH CARE IN CANADA: TIME TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP

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Policy Brief: Health care reform

Context

- No issue is more top-of-mind for Canadians than health care
- When asked what they consider the most important issue, a majority of Canadians consistently rank health care as No. 1
- Underpinning that opinion is strong support for Canada's system of publicly funded, universally accessible Medicare
- The COVID pandemic, coupled with an aging population, has exposed serious vulnerabilities in the health system
- Issues include the lack of family doctors, overstretched hospital emergency wards, long surgical waiting lists
- Result is growing public pressure for reforms that will strengthen the system

Factors for Consideration

- Constitutionally, responsibility for health care is in provincial jurisdiction
- The national system of single-payer, publicly funded Medicare in 1967 was based on Saskatchewan's 1962 model
- To forge a national system the federal government agreed to pay a portion of provincial health care costs
- Over time federal transfers for health became part of general provincial revenues
- The Canada Health Act sets five conditions for provinces to receive funding
 - **public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility**
- The 2022-23 transfer of \$42 billion, made up in cash and tax points, is allocated on an equal-per-capita basis
- There is widespread agreement the system needs to be reformed
- No consensus on the process and what it will take to achieve reform

Questions for Discussion

- Ottawa in the past has attempted to encourage reform
 - How, and what was the result?
- Why has health care reform been so difficult to achieve?
- What are positives and negatives of greater provincial autonomy?
- Should there be conditions attached to federal health transfers?
- If provinces assume greater control, will the national system erode?