

Communiqué
Conference of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Health
Halifax, Nova Scotia - September 4, 2003

HALIFAX - The federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Health agreed today to continue to make public health a top priority by improving public health infrastructure and increasing institutional, provincial, territorial and federal capacity that builds on current strengths and successes across the country.

The Ministers agreed to collaborate on the development of an enhanced public health system and have asked officials to return later this fall with an update that would include progress on:

- clarification of roles and responsibilities for preventing and responding effectively to public health threats, respecting federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions;
- creation of a national network of centres of public health science;
- strengthened public health human resources, including the need for more robust regional and national public health emergency response capacity, and
- enhanced national surveillance and information infrastructure.

Health Ministers agreed to use the next seven weeks to expedite work on the Health Council.

Ministers will recommend a Chair; recommend non-governmental representatives and name government representatives.

They will work to ensure the Council has an appropriate mandate consistent with the 2003 First Ministers Agreement and is affordable and non-bureaucratic.

They will make recommendations to their respective First Ministers regarding these issues.

The Quebec Minister informed his colleagues of an ongoing process in that province to set up a structure that will be mandated to assume a similar role regarding the Quebec health system.

Ministers also announced progress on implementation of a number of other key initiatives from the February 2003 Accord on Health Care Renewal:

- progress on the establishment of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, designed to facilitate collaboration among initiatives being undertaken by governments and stakeholders to enhance patient safety, and Ministers committed to opening the new Institute by the end of this year;
- a reaffirmation of support for improved access to health care services in the home and community, for short-term acute care, short-term end-of-life care; and short-term acute community mental health care. Ministers agreed that a key principle in this discussion is flexibility as described in the 2003 First Ministers Health Accord;

- continue to work on a pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy in order to improve the health of Canadians through all stages of life;
- progress on common indicators for reporting, focussing on timely access, quality, sustainability and health status and wellness, so that Canadians have access to comparable information on the performance of the health care system; and
- Ministers reiterated their continued commitment to work collaboratively with Aboriginal leaders to address the gap in health status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Provincial and Territorial Health Ministers reiterated the importance of the commitment made by the Federal Government in the 2003 Federal Budget to provide up to an additional \$2 billion for health for the provinces and territories at the end of fiscal year 2003-04, if the federal Minister of Finance determines during the month of January 2004 that there will be a sufficient surplus above the normal Contingency Reserve to permit such an investment.

Ministers announced the appointment of members to the Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee (CEDAC). CEDAC is an essential component of the Common Drug Review, which will provide critical appraisals of the best available clinical and pharmacoeconomic evidence. CEDAC will also recommend to governments new drugs they may wish to add to their individual health plans.

Additionally, Ministers released two important health reports: *The Nursing Strategy for Canada* - designed to ensure that nurses continue to play a vital and effective role in the delivery of health care in Canada, and *Moving Forward - The 2003 Progress Report on Tobacco Control* - highlights on the effectiveness of tobacco control efforts across the country and data on declining smoking rates in Canada.

The Government of Quebec adheres to the initiatives relating to home care and to the common indicators and will continue to participate in the other initiatives by sharing information and best practices.

Media Inquiries:

Jirina Vlk
Media Relations
Health Canada
(613) 957-2988

Susan MacLeod
Communications
Nova Scotia Health
(902) 424-7942

Farah Mohamed
Office of Anne McLellan
Minister of Health
(613) 957-1694

Public Inquiries (Health Canada):

(613) 957-2991