

# CANADIAN HEALTH COALITION

Report on Activities and Campaigns

2024-25



# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Dear colleagues and friends –

The past year has brought unprecedented threats and challenges to our public health care system, but it has also been a time of notable Medicare expansion that would not have been possible without the work of the Canadian Health Coalition.

In 2024, I stepped into the role of the chair of the Canadian Health Coalition, replacing the irreplaceable Pauline Worsfold, R.N. She made the coalition what it is today. We can count on Pauline to continue championing the work of the Canadian Health Coalition.

## WE WON PHARMACARE!

I hope you all took time to celebrate our pharmacare victory. Pharmacare has been a priority campaign for us for years. To get across the finish line, we organized press conferences for pharmacare on Parliament Hill with diabetes advocate Mike Bleskie, experts such as Dr. Jane Philpott, and allies such as Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and Heart and Stroke Foundation. When the *Pharmacare Act* was finally passed in Parliament, we lobbied senators for its swift Royal Assent, which happened on October 10, 2024.

Three days after our SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference, on Feb. 27, the governments of Manitoba and Canada announced the first pharmacare agreement. The four-year \$219 million deal will provide free diabetes

medication, contraception and hormone therapy to Manitobans. This is huge! But our work is not done. We will not stop until all provinces and territories in Canada join Manitoba, B.C., PEI and Yukon in signing a pharmacare agreement with the feds. Everyone deserves access to medicine.

## SOS MEDICARE 3.0

Early in 2025, on Feb. 24, we reached a momentous milestone by co-hosting this generation's SOS Medicare Conference in Ottawa. About 300 people – health care workers, experts, patient advocates, students and retirees – from across the country came together to collectively learn and strategize to defend and expand public health care as we headed into a federal election. The threats to Canada's universal public health care system are many but we are stronger today, energized and inspired to fight for better Medicare.

## ANOTHER YEAR OF GROWTH

The Canadian Health Coalition has had another year of growth. In February, we added Haylee Keyes to our staff of three. As National Director of Development and Community Engagement, Haylee is working on ambitious digital campaigns to recruit and engage thousands of new supporters from across the country for better Medicare.



## LOOKING AHEAD

With the new Carney government in power, the Canadian Health Coalition will continue to draw upon the incredible strength of our movement to fulfill our mission. In November 2024, we reaffirmed our priorities at a strategic planning session:

- Increase health care funding and enforce the *Canada Health Act*
- Implement pharmacare
- Legislate enforceable national standards for long-term care
- Stop privatization and remove for-profit from health care, including long-term care
- Eliminate systemic racism from health care

This generation's SOS for Medicare has come from patients, frontline health care workers, as well as retirees, students, injured migrant workers and health equity activists.

This past year has also been a year of tremendous loss for the Canadian Health Coalition family. We mourn the deaths of Kathleen Connors, a long-time chair of the Canadian Health Coalition from 1991 to 2003, Frances Arbour, a former Canadian Health Coalition staffer, Danny Légère, President of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, and Aman Grewal, a former president of the B.C. Nurses' Union. They will be forever with us in the fight for better public health care for all.

Thank you for everything you do for public health care.

Respectfully submitted,



**Jason MacLean**

CHAIR  
CANADIAN HEALTH COALITION



Don Davies, the NDP's health critic, celebrating Parliament's passing of the *Pharmacare* Act, Bill C-64, on June 3, 2024, with the Canadian Health Coalition.

# WINNING PHARMACARE



# SOS MEDICARE

On February 24, 2025, more than 300 people gathered for this generation's SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference in Ottawa. We collectively learned and strategize for better Medicare for all in Canada.



Clockwise from top left:

Jason MacLean, Chair, Canadian Health Coalition and Linda Silas, President, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, kicked off the SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference.

Sharon DeSousa, President, Public Service Alliance of Canada and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh converse at the SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference.

Justine MacIntosh, student organizer with Canadian Health Coalition, at the SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference. Thanks to Justine's efforts, we had 20 students, future activists for Medicare, at our conference.

Pam Parks, Registered Practical Nurse and President of CUPE 6364, sharing the health care worker perspective at the SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference.

Health Minister Mark Holland speaks at the SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference, just days before announcing Canada's first pharmacare agreement.

# MAKING PUBLIC HEALTH CARE AN ELECTION ISSUE

We achieved our goal of getting health care into both the English and French leaders' debates, using our media rapid response strategy and press conference on Parliament Hill.

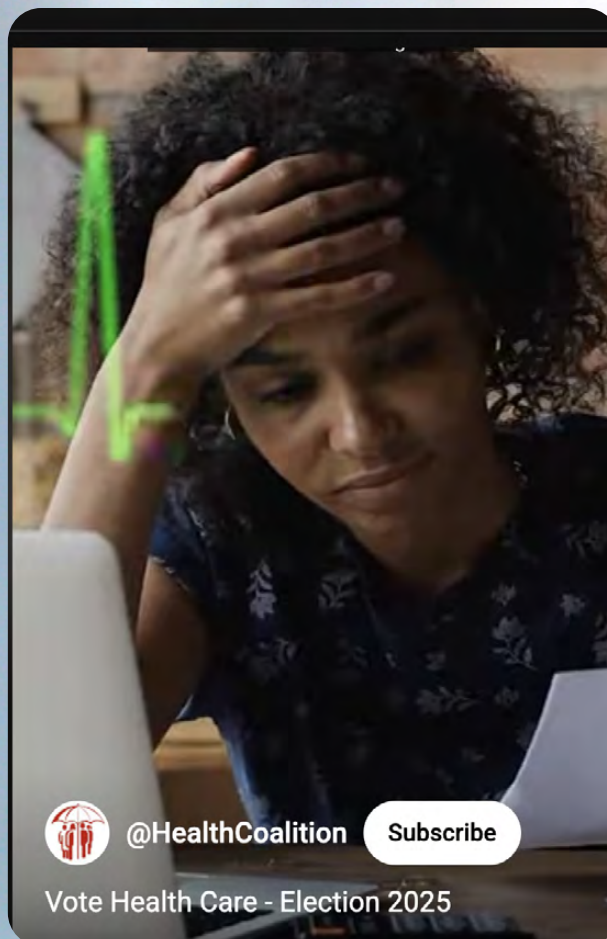
Our online election ad encouraging voters to elect candidates who will defend public health care earned 176,000 views on Facebook.

Our website was swamped by visitors during the election, earning a 38 per cent increase in overall visitors along with a 32 per cent rise in French-language traffic.

Our Vote for Health Care Hub was one of the most visited sections of the site, with an impressive 85 per cent engagement rate, meaning most visitors stayed on the page and interacted with its content.

Hundreds of people used our Write Your Candidates tool to contact more than 400 election candidates, urging them to give their stance on protecting Medicare, pharmacare, and dental care.

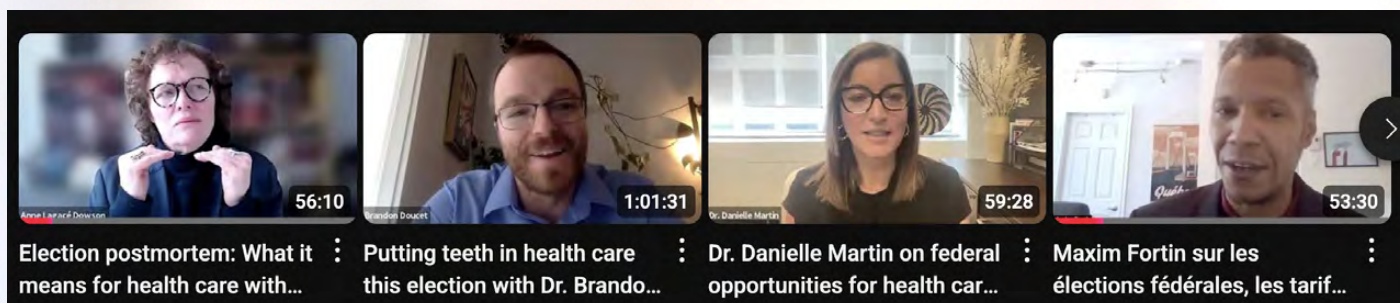
Our visibility throughout the campaign period resulted in the Canadian Health Coalition's Steven Staples being asked to appear alongside André Picard of *The Globe and Mail* in a series of CBC Radio interviews in eight cities from coast to coast, bringing national attention to the importance of health care in this election.



# A TRUSTED SOURCE ON HEALTH CARE



Steven Staples and Mike Bleskie defending pharmacare against big pharma and the private health insurance industry at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Health on May 23, 2024.



Our National Media Director Anne Lagacé Dowson hosted several popular webinars on timely health care topics with Canada's foremost experts and strongest defenders of public health care. The webinars are available for viewing on the Canadian Health Coalition's Youtube channel and are a timely resource for advocates, researchers, and anyone wanting to learn more about public health care.

Canadian Health Coalition's Steven Staples was quoted, above-the-fold, in the first health care story in *The Hill Times* post-election. Thanks to the work of our Media Director Anne Lagacé Dowson, we continue to be sought out by journalists from every major news media outlet in the country, including CBC, Radio-Canada, CTV, Global, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Hill Times*, *The Toronto Star*, CPAC, *Le Devoir* and more.



# Premiers hear **PRIVATIZATION IS A POISON PILL!**

The Canadian Health Coalition with provincial health coalitions always make sure that premiers make health care a top priority at their annual meetings. On July 16, 2024, with the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, we organized a 'Privatization is a Poison Pill' Rally outside the Premiers' meeting in Halifax.



Dr. Robert Barkwell, chair of the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, evoked the memory of Tommy Douglas, father of Medicare, when speaking about the need to finish the dream of Medicare.



Pictured centred is Council of Canadians' Robin Tress and right is CUPE's Abram Lutes at a photo booth to promote pharmacare and public health care.



Unifor National President Lana Payne and Atlantic Regional Director Jennifer Murray stand together inside a picture frame that reads "I support public health care" at the rally.



Siobhán Vipond, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress and vice-chair of the Canadian Health Coalition, energized the crowd with chants for public health care. Taking to the stage were representatives of many labour unions.

# ENDING SYSTEMIC RACISM IN HEALTH CARE

## Defending universal health care in court

The Canadian Health Coalition, along with the Madhu Verma Migrant Justice Centre, FCJ Refugee Centre and others, are intervenors in *Toussaint v Canada* at the Ontario Superior Court. The case involves the estate of Nell Toussaint, a migrant worker who struggled to get access to public health care and died because of being denied access to timely care. At issue in the case is whether Canada violated Nell Toussaint's Charter rights by refusing to implement a UN Human Rights Committee decision that called on Canada to provide her with public health care. If successful, the case will set a precedent for the enforceability of international legal decisions in Canadian courts and for access to health care for all regardless of immigration status.



### Announcing the Nell Toussaint Award for Universal Health Care

We awarded Kerian Burnett, a Nova Scotia migrant worker who fought to get Medicare after being diagnosed with stage 4 cervical cancer, with the Nell Toussaint Award for Universal Health Care at our SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference. The award recognizes someone who has championed universal health care and an end to systemic racism in health care.

### What about the health care of migrants?

Dr. Nisha Kansal joined the Canadian Health Coalition's Anne Lagacé Dowson and Tracy Glynn for a conversation on how doctors and health care providers can better provide health care to migrant workers, the undocumented and uninsured who experience barriers accessing timely health care on November 21, 2024.

### Building Indigenous health equity and justice in Canada

Janice Willier, a member of Sucker Creek First Nation and board member of Friends of Medicare in Alberta, shared the experiences of her Indigenous mother with racism in the health care system, *calling in* everyone in attendance to do better.

# CANADA HEALTH ACT AT 40

## A RESEARCH ROUNDTABLE

We marked the 40th anniversary of the *Canada Health Act* by hosting popular webinars on the principles of the legislation and by bringing back our research roundtable in June of 2024. With the University of Ottawa's Centre for Health Law, Ethics and Policy, we heard the latest research related to the *Canada Health Act*.



### **“We don’t want it to catch on like wildfire,” says Health Canada on clinics charging patients**

Left-to-right: Lee Whitman, Assistant Director of Compliance and Interpretation, Health Canada, and Jennifer Goodyer, Executive Director, Canada Health Act Division, Health Canada, and Tessie Sanci, Executive Editor of *Hill Times Health*.



### **Don’t let the chaos of private health care become the norm, say researchers**

Left-to-right: Sheryl Spithoff, Women’s College Hospital/ University of Toronto, Danyal Raza, University of Toronto/Unity Health Toronto, Andrew Longhurst, Simon Fraser University and and Rebecca Graff-McRae, Parkland Institute, University of Alberta.



### **Be wary of the profiteers trying to stop pharmacare, say researchers**

Left-to-right: Joel Lexchin, York University and Canadian Health Coalition board member, Nikolas Barry-Shaw, Council of Canadians, Marc-André Gagnon, Carleton University, and outgoing Canadian Health Coalition Chair Pauline Worsfold, RN.



## Health policy experts dispel unhelpful myths about the *Canada Health Act*

Left-to-right: Bill Tholl and Greg Marchildon converse with Elizabeth Kwan, Senior Researcher, Canadian Labour Congress.

## Expanding Medicare to be more fair, comprehensive and universal



Left-to-right: Suzanne Dupuis-Blanchard, Nursing Home Without Walls/Université de Moncton, Sarah Kennell, Canadian Mental Health Association, David Macdonald, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and Steven Staples, Canadian Health Coalition.



Left-to-right: Marie Carpentier, Université de Montréal, Martha Paynter, University of New Brunswick and author of *Abortion to Abolition: Reproductive Health and Justice in Canada*, Y.Y. Chen, University of Ottawa and Tracy Glynn, Canadian Health Coalition.



Left-to-right: Dr. Robert Barkwell and Ian Johnson, Nova Scotia Health Coalition, Dr. Edward Xie, Canadian Doctors for Medicare, Frédérique Chabot, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and Steven Staples, Canadian Health Coalition.



## “Medicare unites Canadians” – Dr. Jane Philpott

Anne Lagacé Dowson, Media Director, Canadian Health Coalition, and former federal Health Minister Jane Philpott discuss Philpott’s book, *Health Care for All: A Doctor’s Prescription for a Healthier Canada*.

# Board of Directors and Member Organizations of the Canadian Health Coalition 2024-2025

**We comprise frontline health care workers' unions, community groups, and public health care experts.**

## Executive

**Jason MacLean**, Chair, National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)

**Siobhán Vipond**, Vice-Chair, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

**Vanessa Gruben**, Co-Treasurer, (Legal)

**Rita Morbia**, Co-Treasurer, Inter Pares

**Tristan Newby**, Secretary, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

**Michele Girash**, Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)

**Kellee Janzen**, Unifor

**Dr. Joel Lexchin**, (Research)

**Natalie Mehra**, Ontario Health Coalition

**Jane Mulkewich**, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)

**Keith Newman**, Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC)

**Adrienne Silnicki**, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

**Pat Van Horne**, United Steelworkers

**Christina Warner**, Council of Canadians

**Julie White**, Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC)

## Board Members

**Natalie Appleyard**, Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)

**Pat Armstrong**, PhD (Research)

**Mary Boyd**, PEI Health Coalition

**Ryan Campbell**, Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC)

**Barb Cape**, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Canada

**Isaac Cockburn**, Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)

**Chris Gallaway**, Friends of Medicare

## Staff members

**Tracy Glynn**, PhD, National Director of Operations and Projects

**Haylee Keyes**, National Director of Development and Community Engagement

**Anne Lagacé Dowson**, Media Director

**Steven Staples**, National Director of Policy and Advocacy

## Canadian Health Coalition

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