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For Immediate Release

Attn. Assignment Editor

## MEDIA ADVISORY

**Health Coalitions from across Canada issued a joint statement in advance of the gathering of First Ministers and the Council of the Federation:**

**Any governments across Canada that claim to prioritize the economy while dismantling our public health care have lost their moral compass**

Health Coalitions across Canada want our provincial and federal leaders to succeed in the new international context dealing with the Trump presidency. At this time, we urgently remind our political leaders that access to universal, comprehensive public health care is a core foundation of any just economy. Any governments that claim to prioritize the economy while ignoring the collapse of health care have lost their moral compass.

We remind our political leaders that the economy exists to serve people, not the other way around, and the economy is more than militarism and private sector projects. If a person falls ill or is injured and cannot access health care or mental health care, there is no economy for them. If a 70-year-old goes to a private clinic and is forced to use their life savings and pay thousands of dollars for their surgery, what chance do they have to get out of poverty for the rest of their life? If a person has diabetes and cannot afford their insulin and supplies, what economy is there for them?

Our public health care is a nation-building success, still a source of national pride – and rightfully so. It is a cornerstone element of our public services that Canadians have built over a century to ease suffering and need, and to support people to live to their human potential. The values of equity and compassion that underlie our public health care for all are foundational principles for our society. We expect our political leaders to champion these values while we reforge our national identity in the new international context.

As Canada's leaders meet, our public health care system is, without exaggeration, in open crisis. Runaway privatization is taking funding and staff away from public health care services. Staffing shortages are a national catastrophe, forcing emergency departments to close and leaving health care workers with impossible workloads while patients wait longer and suffer more. Private clinics are violating the Canada Health Act, charging patients hundreds to thousands of dollars for surgeries and diagnostic tests in illegal user fees and extra-billing. Seniors can't access the care they need. Mental health and addiction services are underfunded, subject to privatization and cuts, or are simply unavailable. Millions still do not have access to family medicine. The implementation of the first phase of pharmacare (drug coverage for all) has stalled.

All this is happening as billions are poured into militarization and border enforcement — billions earmarked for Donald Trump's priorities while the urgent daily health care needs of people across Canada are not being addressed.

While our political leaders talk about new "nation-building" plans, those things that have created equity and a more just society in our nation-building over the last century are at risk: a world class public health care system; environmental and labour protections; and, the first steps toward reconciliation with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples. If the only pressure our governments feel comes from Donald Trump and the corporate agenda, we will lose what we value most.

We reject expanding war budgets and gutting regulatory protections while patients and health care workers are left to beg for care. We demand adequate funding for *public* health care, action to safeguard and uphold the Canada Health Act, an end to rampant privatization schemes and deregulation of public interest protections led by the governments in Ontario and Alberta, and true public solutions to the crisis.

Now is the time to stand up for public health care and the values it represents: equity, compassion, dignity, and care for all.

Canadians overwhelmingly support our public system. It cannot wait. It's time for governments to listen — and act.

**For more information:**

**(Alberta) Friends of Medicare** Alyssa Pretty, Communications Officer, (780) 667-4581, [alyssa@friendsofmedicare.org](mailto:alyssa@friendsofmedicare.org);

**BC Health Coalition** Ayendri Riddell, Director of Campaigns and Policy, (604) 787-6560, [ayendri@bchealthcoalition.ca](mailto:ayendri@bchealthcoalition.ca);

**Canadian Health Coalition** Jason MacLean, Chair, (902) 549-1888 [jmaclean@nupge.ca](mailto:jmaclean@nupge.ca);

**Nova Scotia Health Coalition** Jennifer Benoit (she/her) Provincial Coordinator, (902) 406-9422, [coordinator@nshealthcoalition.ca](mailto:coordinator@nshealthcoalition.ca);

**Ontario Health Coalition** Natalie Mehra, Executive Director, (416) 230-6402, [natalie@ontariohc.ca](mailto:natalie@ontariohc.ca);

**PEI Health Coalition** Mary Boyd, Chair, (902) 969-2693, [maryjboyd02@gmail.com](mailto:maryjboyd02@gmail.com)

**Coalition Solidarité Santé** Geneviève Lamarche, coordinator, (514) 442-0577, [cssante@gmail.com](mailto:cssante@gmail.com)