President of CMA weighs in on Ministerial Mandate letter

Ottawa, Nov. 13, 2015—Canada’s physicians are glad to see health care back on the federal to-do list with the release Friday of mandate letters from the Prime Minister to his ministers.

In particular, we are encouraged that a key part of the mandate of Health Minister Dr. Jane Philpott is the development of a new multi-year Health Accord that includes a long-term funding agreement. Given Canada’s aging population, if there was ever a time for a renewed health accord it is now.

Better home care, financial support for family caregivers, better palliative care and cheaper medication have all been part of physicians’ prescription for better care for Canadians. It is good to see them codified as official federal deliverables. Priority attention for mental health is overdue and we are glad to see public health getting the attention it deserves. The CMA will continue to voice concerns about the consumption of marijuana, legally or otherwise. This is because as physicians we simply don’t know enough about the long-term effects of marijuana. We remain uncomfortable with this drug just as we oppose the smoking of any substance. We were glad to see, however, that the health minister will be assisting in the regulation of marijuana as well as its legalization.

It is encouraging that the health of Canadians is identified as a priority in the mandate letters of six ministers. This is what Canadians deserve on everything from the Nutrition North initiative to health care for refugees.

On a final note, we recognize the difficulty ministers will face developing policy on physician assisted dying that complies with last February’s Supreme Court ruling. But the CMA will continue to vigorously argue that physicians’ right of conscience be respected.

We wish the incoming cabinet every success and hope the letters of mandate mark the beginning of a renewal for Canada’s health care system.

Dr. Cindy Forbes
President, Canadian Medical Association
The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is the national voice of Canadian physicians. Founded in 1867, the CMA is a voluntary professional organization representing more than 80,000 of Canada’s physicians and comprising 12 provincial and territorial medical associations and 60 national medical organizations. CMA’s mission is helping physicians care for patients. The CMA will be the leader in engaging and serving physicians and be the national voice for the highest standards for health and health care.

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