



Resilient Healthcare Coalition

Building Stronger Canadian Health Care Systems

Looking to catalyze a vital cross-government policy conversation at the dawn of a new mandate for the Government of Canada, the Resilient Healthcare Coalition (RHC) has taken the liberty of drafting a proposed Joint Mandate Letter.

Addressed to both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, we hope the letter serves as an inspiration for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as he determines the strategic direction of his new government.

Beginning on the next page, the letter also reflects not only the RHC's belief in the fundamental connection between population health and economic health, but also our top two policy objectives: (1) optimizing the use of health care data to better-inform health care decisions; and (2) expanding and accelerating access to innovative health technologies – from vaccines and diagnostics to therapeutics and medical devices.

We hope that this letter sparks a new period of inclusive policymaking that leverages health system leaders from industry, research, and patient groups across the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

October 28, 2021

Dear Mr. Duclos and Mr. Champagne,

Thank you for agreeing to serve Canadians as, respectively, Minister of Health and Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

On September 20, 2021, Canadians made a collective choice about the future of this great country, and they reflected their deep optimism about both the challenging times in which we live, and the incredible opportunities that lie ahead.

It is impossible to articulate a mandate for this new era without first taking a moment to reflect on the defining aspect of the one it replaces.

COVID-19 had a devastating and sweeping effect on our country. Beyond the illness and death of so many of our fellow citizens, it also distorted and weakened Canadian health care systems by forcing them to redirect time, energy, people, and money to deal with what we can only hope was a once-in-a-century pandemic. Frontline workers across the country delivered exceptional care that was sustained, effective and compassionate, and we all owe a debt of gratitude to their contribution and their bravery.

Over the course of the pandemic, leaders from across your two Ministries worked side-by-side on multiple projects of the utmost national importance, from embracing the regulatory agility required for timely access to coronavirus vaccines and treatments, to investing in world-class Canadian researchers, to expanding the country's biomanufacturing capacity through a critical mass of new investments. This collaboration is highlighted in Canada's recent *Biomanufacturing and Life Sciences Strategy* – and symbolized by your joint authorship.

The words you wrote to introduce the strategy are as true now as they were then: *"We have much more work to do to ensure Canadians remain protected against future health threats. We know we have to rebuild our biomanufacturing sector and support the innovative and world-leading scientists who are finding made-in-Canada solutions to global challenges."* In the past, those twin goals – protecting the health of Canadians and protecting the health of its economy – were occasionally seen as disconnected (at best) or competitive (at worst). My first and most

foundational request is that you dismantle these unnecessary siloes by working together to ensure that Canadians see health and wealth as mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive.

My second request is for you to ensure that Canada doesn't simply return to a pre-pandemic status quo, but instead builds a stronger and more interconnected health care and life sciences ecosystem that is more resilient, more patient-centred and more integral to our economic recovery than ever before.

And finally, my third request is that you bring an explicit health equity lens to your work to better address the specific health needs of marginalized communities across the country, especially the complex and interconnected challenges faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Making Canadian Health Care Systems More Resilient

To give you the authority to accomplish this essential goal, I am charging you both with prioritizing the objectives and recommendations laid out in a **Joint Mandate Letter**. Over the duration of this new government's mandate, it will be imperative for you to collaborate – along with partners from around the cabinet table and your provincial and territorial peers – to make Canadian health care systems more responsive to future challenges, better connected to our pan-Canadian life sciences ecosystem and possessing the agility and openness needed to incorporate new solutions from a wide range of collaborators.

This task is neither a simple nor an easy one. For this reason, I want you to focus your joint efforts on two policy objectives I see as essential to improving patient care and health outcomes: **(1) Enhancing patient access to new and innovative health technologies**; and **(2) Optimizing the use of health data to better inform health care decisions**.

To meet these objectives, you will need to drive progress in five critical areas:

- I. **Ensuring equitable access to a broad spectrum of essential vaccines and related treatments.** As COVID-19 demonstrated, it is essential for Canada to develop a world-class vaccine evaluation body that delivers evidence-based recommendations in a clear, coherent, and compelling

manner – and that is accompanied by the funding required to massively expand access to a host of routine and emergency immunizations. You must work with your Provincial and Territorial counterparts to help them deliver the sufficient critical infrastructure required for these vaccines – and a new wave of COVID-19 treatments – to become cornerstones of improved public health.

- II. **Closing the widening health research gap.** The pandemic demonstrated not only the exceptional calibre of so many Canadian scientists and research centres, but also the need to ensure that those nodes of excellence – as well as their partners in the health charity sector – are better resourced to fill the research voids that have widened over the past two years. From accelerating the journey from research to commercialization, to catalyzing new investments in clinical trials, to better evaluating the experiences and outcomes of patients and citizens, the research opportunities that await this country demand not only our attention but also our investment.
- III. **Expanding the pan-Canadian Health Data Strategy.** I am directing you to work especially closely with your provincial and territorial partners to ensure that health data is standardized and can be safely, effectively, and consistently gathered, anonymized, analyzed, and shared to better connect biomedical treatments and patient outcomes. This work will start in our own house, where too many federal departments and agencies – from Statistics Canada to the Canadian Institute for Health Information – collect dedicated and purpose-built data pools that have long been disconnected and isolated from one another.
- IV. **Reducing the time to bring new innovations to patients.** You must work together to create a coordinated and synchronized regulatory regime that reduces the time between when innovative drugs, vaccines, and medical devices are submitted to Health Canada and their access by patients and clinicians. It is especially important that you prioritize identifying and implementing models that accelerate access to new health technologies across the country, to ensure all Canadians can access the treatments they need, when they need them.

- V. **Ensuring Canadians have world-leading access to the expanding array of genomic and other revolutionary tools that better prevent, diagnose, and treat disease.** You must work together to ensure that provinces and territories have the sustainable and equitable funding they need to broaden access to innovative therapies and their companion diagnostics. Without better and faster access to tools and technologies, Canada will fail to capture the incredible promise of precision medicine and its connection to personalized care.

Taken together, these five vectors of progress will demonstrate to Canadians the intensified commitment of this government to building more resilient health care systems across this great country and to ensuring that healthy Canadians can drive – and benefit from – a healthy economy.

Committing to Targets and Tracking Our Successes

The five principles outlined above are as ambitious as they are essential, and I understand that you can't do this work alone. That's why I'm charging you with the creation of a **Health and Biosciences Strategy Group**. Building on the legacy of the Health and Biosciences Economic Strategy Table, the HBSG will deliver an operational plan to Canadians by March 31, 2022, that outlines how this plan will be accomplished, by whom and when. Co-chaired by you both – and comprised of leaders from the worlds of science & research, industry, patient groups and health charities – the HBSG will be supported by a purpose-built secretariat that draws on expertise from across government.

In closing, I want to reiterate the significance of this joint mandate letter as a shared commitment to Canadians that their federal government will work diligently and consistently to strengthen the resilience of health systems across the country in partnership with provinces and territories, and leaders from the worlds of patient advocacy, research and commercialization and industry. This goal of health system resilience is too important for any of us to tackle on our own.

Yours sincerely,

The Prime Minister