The Health Action Lobby releases its pre-election health platform

JEFF MORRISON,
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THE CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION (CPhA) is a leading organization within the Health Action Lobby (HEAL), a coalition of 40 national health care organizations with a mandate to represent the collective interests of the health community with the federal government. In December, HEAL released its health care platform for federal political parties in advance of the next federal election. With a federal election expected in October 2015, HEAL has been working for the past 2 years to develop a set of recommendations aimed at strengthening the Canadian health care system. CPhA has been at the forefront in the development of the recommendations.

The platform identifies steps that could be taken by the federal government to accelerate the pace of innovation, meet the changing health needs of Canadians, strengthen strategic partnerships with the provinces and territories and improve the health of Canadians and the care they receive. To meet these objectives, the HEAL platform identifies 6 key themes:

1. Although HEAL recognizes that health care is delivered by provinces and territories, given the federal government's own responsibilities in health, including the fact that it is the fifth largest health delivery body and a significant funder, the federal government needs to work more collaboratively with provinces and territories. Federal participation at the Council of the Federation's Health Care Innovation Working Group would be a good first step.
2. Greater clarity is needed with regard to the role of the federal government. HEAL has developed a vision statement that should guide future federal policy making in health care.
3. A series of principles to transform the health system have been included in the platform, based on the work of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the Triple Aim approach.

4. HEAL believes that federal funding for health care should reflect the Romanow Commission's goal of 25% of total cost, up from its current level of approximately 20%. To more equitably distribute federal funds, HEAL is also recommending a Demographic Top-Up Fund that would reflect provinces/territories with older populations requiring greater health care assistance.
5. HEAL believes the federal government can play a more direct role in 3 key areas:

- Canada's aging population—HEAL would like a national dialogue on how to help Canadians finance the costs associated with aging. HEAL is also proposing a National Community-Based Health Infrastructure Fund to ensure an adequate supply of nursing home and long-term care beds.
- Access to prescription drugs—HEAL has adopted CPhA's 2008 position on catastrophic drug coverage, which calls on the federal government to introduce a catastrophic drug insurance program that would prevent undue financial hardships in the event of exorbitant costs for medicines.
- Accelerating the spread of innovation—HEAL is proposing the creation of a National Health Innovation Fund that could accelerate the adoption of innovative practices in primary care, mental health and addictions, and health human resources.

6. The federal government needs to develop a set of pan-Canadian health system performance indicators that would be used by all jurisdictions. These indicators would provide Canadians and policy makers with a clearer picture of how health systems are performing in comparison to objectives.

This platform is intended to provide political parties with the unified views and perspectives

of the health community on ways the federal government can strengthen the health care system in Canada.

In the lead-up to and during the next federal election, we encourage pharmacists, as integral members of the health care community, to attend all candidates' debates, meet with your candidates

in person or send them a note indicating your support for these ideas and asking where they stand on issues related to health care.

Jeff Morrison is Director of Government Relations and Public Affairs with the Canadian Pharmacists Association.