

# news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Premiers must focus on public innovation to strengthen Medicare

The new Health Care Innovation Working Group announced at this week's Council of the Federation meeting is an opportunity for the provinces to build on the many positive public solutions that make Medicare stronger and avoid unaffordable for-profit care, says the BC Health Coalition.

"The provinces must look for ways to build the capacity of public non-profit health care delivery and protect the great gains in equality, access, fairness and efficiency that are the hallmark of our public health care system," said BC Health Coalition co-chair Rachel Tutte.

Tutte said the provinces must reject Saskatchewan premier Brad Wall's plan to increase public funding for the delivery of services in for-profit surgical facilities.

"The evidence is clear that for-profit clinics cost more than public facilities. They increase overall wait times by draining scarce human resources from the public system, and compromise patient safety," said Tutte. "For-profit health care is not innovative—it's a threat to Canadians' health and our wallets—both the public purse and household budgets."

Tutte suggested that premiers also listen to voters' desire for a strong public health care system, referring to a recent Nanos Research poll showing that 94 percent of Canadians support public—not private, for-profit—solutions to make the country's health care system stronger.

"There is no shortage of proven public solutions to strengthen health care," said Tutte, who noted that B.C. has had some real success with integrated health care reform projects such as the regional improvement strategy in the Northern Health Authority, as well as public hip and knee replacement programs in the Lower Mainland.

Tutte said that these innovations require the leadership and participation of the federal government and that it is the premiers' responsibility to demand that Ottawa continue to play a central coordinating role in ensuring national care standards.

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