



Change at the top

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On October 19th, Canadians soundly rejected the Harper Conservatives' refusal to provide federal leadership on health care.

Instead, we elected a majority Liberal government which made important promises during the election campaign to improve Canada's public health care system.

During the campaign, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau promised \$3 billion over the next four years to improve home care, action to increase the availability of mental health services, and to work with the provinces to reduce the cost of prescription drugs through bulk buying, reducing unnecessary overprescribing of medications and decreasing adverse drug reactions.

The Liberal platform states: "Our commitment is nothing less than ensuring an integrated primary care system in Canada that is multidisciplinary, patient-centered, and committed to managing chronic disease within community, home, and long-term care settings."

The Liberals' emphasis on working with the provinces to deal with the demands of our aging population is also reflected in their promise to spend almost \$20 billion over ten years on "social infrastructure", which will prioritize affordable housing and seniors' facilities - including long-term care facilities.

The Liberals were elected on a platform that includes specific measures aimed at helping Canadians eat healthier, and at improving children's health. Their platform also includes a promise to make it easier for people caring for sick family members to access compassionate care benefits under Canada's Employment Insurance plan.

But the most important promise made by the Liberals may be their commitment to sit down with the provinces and territories to negotiate a new Health Accord that includes a long-term agreement on funding. "We need a federal government that is willing to sit down and work with the provinces, not dictate at the provinces but set clear targets and expectations," stated Trudeau during the campaign.

HSA members will play a critical role in implementing all of these improvements to health care - whether it's improving mental health services or prescribing practices, or providing integrated, multidisciplinary primary care in community, home, and long-term care settings.

But first we need to make sure our new government follows through on its health care commitments, and makes them a priority in the coming months. You can join other public health supporters in sending Prime Minister-designate Trudeau an e-mail urging him to act on his health care promises by visiting the BC Health Coalition site at bchealthcoalition.ca.

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