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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Annual Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Health  
Vancouver, British Columbia - October 16-17, 2004**

**VANCOUVER, October 17, 2004** - In their first opportunity to gather after the recent First Ministers' Meeting (FMM), Canada's federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Health have begun to work out the details behind the First Ministers' 10-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care.

"I am pleased with the progress which has been made at this Vancouver meeting," said BC Health Services Minister and co-chair Colin Hansen. "The commitment and active participation of all Health Ministers has added to the momentum begun by First Ministers in September."

"We are moving forward to meet our commitments to reduce wait times, improve access and develop a national pharmaceuticals strategy," said Federal Minister Ujjal Dosanjh, co-chair. "Canadians want real and tangible change and we will work with each other, the health care community and Canadians with that goal in mind."

Health Ministers re-affirmed the commitment made at the Special Meeting of First Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders on September 13, 2004, to improve Aboriginal health. Ministers acknowledged the importance of ensuring input from both regional and national Aboriginal organizations in pursuit of this goal. Health Ministers agreed that Ministers Dosanjh and Smitherman, as co-chair Ministers, will meet early in 2005 with Aboriginal leaders and co-chair Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs to initiate a process to develop a blueprint by September 2005 for improving health status. Ministers agreed on the need to expedite the work on the federal investment of \$700M in Aboriginal health and to align this investment with the priorities discussed at the First Ministers' meeting with Aboriginal leaders in September 2004.

Discussions concentrated on how to make progress on three key elements of the 10-year plan: reducing wait times; moving ahead on the national pharmaceuticals strategy; and advancing the development of public health goals and targets for the country.

**NEXT STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING THE 10-YEAR PLAN****Reducing Wait Times and Improving Access**

Health Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to meeting their FMM obligations in regard to wait times and access and will meet again in January 2005 to review progress on these commitments.

**National Pharmaceuticals Strategy**

As directed by First Ministers, Health Ministers established a Ministerial Task Force to develop and implement the national pharmaceuticals strategy and report on progress by

June 30, 2006. Federal Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh and BC Minister of Health Services Colin Hansen will co-chair the Ministerial Task Force.

### **Public Health Goals and Targets**

Further to the direction from First Ministers, Ministers of Health agreed to initiate work on public health goals and targets, which will address the broad determinants that lead to improved health outcomes for all Canadians.

Quebec's contribution to these initiatives will correspond to the provisions of the arrangement entitled "Asymmetrical Federalism that Respects Quebec's Jurisdiction" which accompanies the First Ministers' 10-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care.

While quick action on the 10-year plan was the priority, the meeting agenda also included ongoing federal-provincial-territorial work on other important health care and public health initiatives.

### **HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES**

Ministers approved a new approach for assessing proposals for changes in entry-to-practice credentials for medical and health professions. This will contribute to a sufficient supply of medical and health professionals to provide timely and high quality care in Canada. The process will help governments determine whether a proposed change in credentials for entry-to-practice serves the interests of patients and the health care system. Quebec, having its own process, will collaborate on this initiative by supporting ongoing exchange of information.

Ministers discussed ways in which jurisdictions could collaborate further to enhance opportunities for internationally educated health professionals to practice in Canada to better meet the health care needs of Canadians.

### **OTHER PREVENTION, HEALTH PROMOTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVES**

Ministers committed to advancing the Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy, which will focus initially on increasing physical activity, healthy eating and their relationship to healthy weight. A Healthy Living Strategy will be presented to Ministers of Health at their annual meeting in September 2005.

As a key element of that strategy, Ministers announced the establishment of the Intersectoral Healthy Living Network. The Network is composed of members from federal, provincial and territorial bodies and intersectoral stakeholders who work in the areas of health promotion and disease prevention.

Quebec, while not participating in the Pan-Canadian Health Living Strategy, committed to collaborate with all of those initiatives relating to prevention and health promotion by sharing information and best practices.

Ministers also committed to continue working with their colleagues in Agriculture on a National Food Policy Framework. Ministers discussed the development of a comprehensive approach to coordinating policy direction and decision-making on food issues to further

strengthen consumer confidence, health protection and economic growth. Further discussions on the development of a framework will take place in the coming months.

Health Ministers were also updated on the progress of Canada's emergency preparedness and response capacity, and are pleased with the ongoing efforts to enhance Canada's ability to prepare for and respond to a range of public health emergencies.

The meeting was the first opportunity for Health Ministers to meet with the Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. David Butler-Jones. Many of the provincial, territorial and federal public health initiatives they discussed will be supported by the new Public Health Agency of Canada.

### **HEALTH TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY**

Health Ministers approved a new Canadian Health Technology Strategy. This development arises from the 2003 Accord on Health Care Renewal's commitment to develop a comprehensive strategy to assess the impact of health technologies and provide advice on how to maximize their effective utilization. The Strategy represents a collaborative approach towards ensuring that Canadians have ongoing access to appropriate health care technology.

All Health Ministers concluded the meeting with a commitment to strengthen publicly funded health care and continue to report to their respective jurisdictions on progress.

The 2nd set of reports on comparable performance indicators will be released by November 30, 2004.

Health Ministers will meet again in January 2005 to review progress.

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#### Media Inquiries

Paige Raymond-Kovach  
Health Canada  
(613) 948-4629

Adèle Blanchard  
Office of the Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh  
(613) 957-0200

Carol Carman  
Public Affairs  
British Columbia Ministry of Health Services  
(250) 952-1889

Jocelyn Stanton  
Office of the Honourable Colin Hansen

(250) 953-3547

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**Canadian Intergovernmental  
Conference Secretariat (CICS)**

[webmaster@scics.gc.ca](mailto:webmaster@scics.gc.ca)

