

December 13, 2019

The Honourable Patty Hajdu
Minister of Health
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A2

Dear Honourable Minister Hajdu,

Congratulations on your election to the House of Commons and your appointment as Minister of Health.

I write to you on behalf of Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights (formerly Planned Parenthood Canada), a progressive, pro-choice charitable organization committed to advancing and upholding sexual and reproductive health and rights in Canada and globally.

We are pleased to see references in your mandate letter to: the full realization of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, including ensuring the everyone in Canada has access to the full suite of reproductive services and medications across the country, ensuring compliance with the Canada health Act (particularly on matters related to extra billing) and the creation of a National Institute for Women's Health Research

Access to abortion care

We are additionally pleased to hear statements made by the Prime Minister to address persisting barriers regarding abortion access across the country, including in New Brunswick.

As you know, access to abortion care remains a serious concern for many across the country. Only one hospital in six offers abortion in Canada. Unnecessarily rules and regulations at provincial and territorial levels, or within regional health systems and hospital settings, prevent access. Many people seeking care have to travel large distances to access abortion, and often must travel to the US for abortion services post-23 weeks, face interference and intimidation from anti-choice organizations and activists that often mislead, confuse, and delay individuals seeking an abortion, or experience harassment, threats, violence, and intimidation from anti-choice protesters outside of sexual health clinics and hospitals which provide abortion.

We urge you to take swift action on the following issues:

- Immediately withhold cash transfers under the *Canada Health Act* to New Brunswick until such time it eliminates regulation 84-20 of the *Health Services Payment Act*, which prevents the funding of abortion care outside of hospital settings;
- Task Health Canada with publishing accurate information regarding abortion care and how to access it across the country;
- Establish a fully-funded national protocol for people seeking abortion services post-23 weeks outside of Canada; and
- Mandate the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health to undertake a study to identify strategies to ensure that abortion services are available, accessible, acceptable, and of good quality.

Comprehensive cost-coverage for sexual and reproductive health medicines and devices

Many individuals in Canada are falling through the cracks, unable to afford the medicine and devices they need to support their sexual and reproductive health. The ability to manage your own fertility, decide if and when to have children, have healthy pregnancies, affirm your own gender, and prevent, treat, or manage sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, should not depend on private or patchwork insurance coverage. With these gaps in drug coverage disproportionately affecting the health outcomes of some populations more than others (e.g. women, Indigenous communities, trans and gender non-conforming people, racialized communities, and those of lower socioeconomic or health status), the absence of universal Pharmacare is an issue of inequality and discrimination.

We urge you to take swift action on the following issues:

- Immediately commit to universal cost coverage of contraceptives for everyone in Canada;
- Ensure the National Pharmacare Strategy is universal, single-payer, portable, accessible, and comprehensive; and
- Ensure that any National Formulary include all prescription medications that relate to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Take a leadership role to address the sex-ed crisis

Comprehensive sexuality education is recognized as a human right of all young people, yet the sex-ed young people in Canada receive is severely lacking, if taught at all. It is not in line with international standards, is outdated, is not comprehensive, is not monitored or evaluated to guarantee quality, and is taught by educators with low to no support. The evidence is clear: sex-ed saves lives, and when done right, it is life-changing and supports health and safety. Quality sex-ed promotes consent, reduces STI rates, creates LGBTQI2S+ visibility and inclusion, and generally makes young people happier, healthier, and safer.

The [Government of Canada has a human rights obligation](#) to provide evidence-based, scientifically accurate, gender-sensitive, LGBTQI2S+ inclusive and sex-positive sex-ed to all students. Despite education being provincial jurisdiction, the federal government has the capacity to support educators in their delivery of sex-ed by working *with and supporting* provinces and territories to build capacity to delivery quality sex-ed, in line with the [2019 Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education](#).

We urge you to take swift action on the following issues:

- Launch a national strategy and awareness raising campaign to equalize access to comprehensive sexuality education across provinces and territories, in line with the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*;
- Allocate funds to the Public Health Agency of Canada to invest in the training of professional sexual health educators;
- Conduct regular national monitoring of sexual health indicators; and
- Task the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health to undertake a study to explore the current state of sexuality education in Canada and produce recommendations aimed at strengthening the development and implementation of sexuality education across the country.

We look forward to working with you to implement these and other reforms in Canada and welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the above in greater detail.



Sincerely,



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CC: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.