

Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada Responds to Commitment on Canada Health Act Services Policy Implementation

VANCOUVER, CANADA, January 13, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada (NPAC) acknowledges the Government of Canada's renewed commitment to uphold the principles of the Canada Health Act (CHA) through the newly announced Services Policy, set to take effect on April 1, 2026. This policy underscores the importance of ensuring access to medically necessary care without user charges or extra billing, a critical step in safeguarding Canada's publicly funded health care system.

Nurse practitioners (NPs) have become an indispensable part of the health care landscape, in the delivery of primary, acute and speciality services. As autonomous providers, NPs diagnose, treat, prescribe, and refer patients, often serving as the sole primary care providers in rural and underserved communities. These contributions have been vital in addressing the growing demand for timely, accessible care across Canada.

However, significant barriers remain to fully realizing the potential of NPs to deliver services under the CHA. For example, NPs often lack access to equitable funding models, which limits their ability to offer insured services to Canadians under the same terms as physicians.

"NPs play a pivotal role in improving access to care for Canadians, particularly in areas where health care gaps persist," said Dr. Laura Housden, President of the Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada. "To truly embrace innovation and uphold the principles of the CHA, we need comprehensive support from federal, provincial, and territorial governments to ensure funding models that enable NPs to provide all medically necessary services under the Canada Health Act."

The expansion of scopes of practice for regulated health care professionals, including NPs, has proven to be a cost-effective and patient-centered solution to Canada's health care challenges. In addition to traditional care models, we acknowledge and support the ongoing discussions around nurse practitioners' engagement in employer-paid virtual care. In today's technologically advanced health care community, access to robust virtual care services supports both access and flow, impacting the broader health care system by alleviating pressure and improving efficiency.

To align with this evolution, NPAC calls on all governments to:

1. Develop Accessible Funding Models for NPs: Ensure equitable remuneration for NPs delivering insured services, comparable to the funding available for physician services.
2. Integrate NPs Fully into Provincial and Territorial Health Insurance Plans: Remove barriers preventing NPs from providing CHA-insured services, including mental health and specialist referrals, to ensure Canadians receive the care they need without additional charges.
3. Support NP-Led Innovations: Invest in residency and fellowship programs to expand the capacity and specialized expertise of the NP workforce, addressing complex care needs and promoting retention in the profession.
4. Establish a Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Secretariat: Create a dedicated secretariat that actively engages NPs, their professional associations, and health care employers to ensure the seamless integration of NPs into health care systems across jurisdictions. This collaborative body would identify and address systemic barriers, promote best practices, and monitor progress toward the equitable integration of NPs.

Furthermore, NPAC calls for a refresh of the Canadian Nurse Practitioner Initiative to update the current status and strategy for NP growth and development across the country. This refresh will ensure that NPs are well-positioned to continue their crucial contributions to the health care system, particularly as the landscape evolves in response to emerging challenges and opportunities.

As governments prepare for the implementation of the CHA Services Policy, NPAC remains committed to working collaboratively to ensure that innovations in health care delivery, including NP-led models of care, are fully supported. Together, we can uphold the principles of Medicare while enhancing access to high-quality, equitable health care for all Canadians.

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