



Over 200 organizations across Canada sign open letter for #HealthCare4All

May 21 2020 –

At a moment of public health crisis in Canada due to COVID-19, the Healthcare for All National Coalition is calling on the federal government to work closely with provincial and territorial governments to ensure access to healthcare for all people living in Canada. The coalition, comprised of health and migrant justice advocacy organizations across the country, identifies this as both an issue of justice and equity, and of public health. The response across provincial and territorial governments has been inconsistent and fragmented. As such, the coalition has come together with over 200 civil society organizations nationally and sent an open letter to the federal government calling for access to healthcare for all people living in Canada, including those currently living in detention, regardless of immigration and citizenship status.

Carole Benedicte Ze, a refugee claimant from Cameroon who was initially refused access to testing after contracting COVID-19 while volunteering at a Montreal care home, said “It was hard for me to access testing, so just imagine how much worse it is for people who have no status. Nobody should be refused health care when they are sick, no matter what their status. We all need care.”

The network is calling on the Federal Government, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, to ensure that health coverage is available to all, regardless of immigration status and that this policy change has a clear implementation plan in all hospitals and health centres. In addition, the coalition asks that these facilities be reminded of their ongoing legal obligation to protect patient privacy and not share information with Canada Border Services Agency. They are asking for further clarification to the CBSA and general public that people should not be subjected to detention or deportation when or after accessing healthcare.

Access to healthcare is a major determinant of health, even outside of the context of a pandemic - as such, the coalition also calls on the Federal Government, acting in concert with provincial and territorial governments, to ensure all above measures are made permanent.

“An Injury to One is An Injury to All. We need to understand that health problems in any community affect the whole society. Denying proper access to migrant, Black, Indigenous or People of Colour communities is unacceptable, and weakens any Federal or Provincial health strategy.” - Marcos Luciano, Director of Migrante Alberta (member organization of the Migrant Rights Network).

Dr. Sandy Buchman, President of the Canadian Medical Association also said, “A global pandemic has shown us, now more than ever, that we must ensure equitable access to health care for all. And we must always strive to provide access to care for all people living in Canada.”

The letter with over 200 organizational signatories has been sent to the Federal Government, with copies to provincial and territorial governments. The coalition awaits a response.

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