

First Minister's Press Conference on the Health Accord-Ottawa, Ontario

**Premier Gordon Campbell
February 5, 2003**

Comments of Prince Edward Island Premier Pat Binns, Head of the Premiers Council on Health:

Thank you Prime Minister.

On behalf of Canada's Premiers I wish to confirm that we have reached an agreement with the Prime Minister. I should say an arrangement with the Prime Minister that leads toward a solution for renewing and sustaining health care for Canadians.

Each of the provincial premiers has agreed to a jointly approved text, which outlines the principles of health care we hope to achieve.

The premiers of the Territories have not agreed to the text but continue - we will continue to work with them.

I want to thank my fellow premiers for the untiring efforts and dedication over the past few years in working together on improving health care for Canadians.

With the financial commitment announced today by the federal government we are in a position to make further progress in fulfilling our vision of health care as articulated at the First Minister's meeting in 2000. Namely that Canadians will have publicly funded health services that provide quality health care and they promote the health and well being of Canadians and a cost effective and fair manner.

It will come as no surprise that the amount of money resulting from this arrangement falls far short of what the provinces believe is necessary for long-term sustainability and for completion of the reforms envisioned by Commissioner Romanow and others.

However premiers felt it was important to put the interests of patients first and to accept the arrangement.

Ottawa is still paying for a relatively small portion of the health care costs in the country. They will invest 70 billion dollars over the next eight years, if there is no increase. And the province will spend roughly 568 billion over the same eight years.

Provinces and Territories have been making improvements to health care from increasing the number of health care workers, to Telehealth, to primary care reform.

With the additional funding announced today we will cooperate with Ottawa to continue to address priority areas of home care, primary care, drug coverage and diagnostic equipment. However we remain concerned about our ability to deliver the existing services with the resources that are available.

Although the funds committed today by the Prime Minister are not insignificant, they do fall short of what is required.

We will continue to work with the Prime Minister so that we can demonstrate our collective commitment to health care through adequate and sustainable funding.

We are also pleased that the Prime Minister has agreed to lift the ceiling on equalization.

Provinces and Territories have been and will continue to be accountable for our spending on health care.

In September of 2002 we began publishing a wide range of health indicators relating to the delivery of health care, health outcomes, patient satisfaction and disease prevention.

Today we have agreed to expand our reporting, as has the Federal government.

We also commit that this funding will be spent in health care. It will be used to reinforce existing services and to create meaning full change in the agreed priority

areas.

Thank you.

Comments of Premier Campbell

Premier Gordon Campbell:

Can I just say one thing. Let me just say one thing.

This agreement actually covers two tracks.

There is a track for sustainability and that provides support for the existing system. There is a track for reform.

The premiers are very clear that this is and will come as no surprise to any of you here that this was not the amount of money that we felt was necessary to carry both of those of those on fruition.

The fact of the matter is we've taken steps down the road - both roads. The one of sustainability which is important for the existing services and the one of reform which frankly are reforms that we would all like to be able to carry out.

There is flexibility built into the agreement now so that in different provinces you can have different responses within that reform package and I think that's going to important in the long term as well.



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