



Health

Poverty has been declared the single largest determinant of health by the **World Health Organization**. Factors like food insecurity, geography (such as in Northern and Indigenous communities), poor housing conditions, mental health concerns, and high cost of prescriptions and preventative health care combine to cause poor health among low-income individuals. The Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) 2017, High Stakes, Clear Choices, **estimates** that 3.5 million Canadians lack basic drug coverage and one-quarter of Canadian families don't take prescribed medication due to high costs.

There is a strong correlation between socioeconomic inequality and poor health; as inequalities have widened in Canada, so have disparities in health. These disparities account for **an estimated 20%** of all health care spending. Similarly, the cost of hospitalization due to not taking prescribed medications has added \$7-9 billion per year to healthcare spending.

Suggested policy initiatives:

- ✓ **Recognize the social determinants of health** (income, employment, food security, etc.) in legislation as an aspect of the anti-poverty policymaking process.
- ✓ **Develop, in collaboration with all levels of government, a new Continuing Care Program** to implement high-quality, universal, culturally-appropriate, publicly-funded and managed care. This should include measurable goals and timelines, monitoring and review mechanisms, as well as explicit recognition of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
- ✓ **Develop, in collaboration with all levels of government, a National Pharmacare Program** that is universal and publicly-funded. The program would provide cost-effective prescription drugs to all Canadians, regardless of income, occupation, age, or location. The 2017 AFB calls for \$3-4 billion for a pharmacare plan, including 10% of private expenditures on prescription drugs.
- ✓ **Implement the National Mental Health Strategy** developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This includes a national campaign to combat stigma and discrimination, policies and programs that establish greater access to necessary mental health and addictions for vulnerable individuals.
- ✓ **Fund, support and encourage collaborative ventures to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples**, with the long-term goal of creating a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Health Authority.