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STATEMENT

Children's Health Organizations Unite to Urge Government Action on HESA Child Health Study Recommendations



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Ottawa, June 10, 2024 - Children's Healthcare Canada, the Pediatric Chairs of Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and the Canadian Association of Paediatric Nurses stand united today in calling upon the federal government to take immediate action to enact the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Health (HESA) in their comprehensive study of child health.

We recognize and applaud the alignment between the findings and recommendations of HESA's report with the expert testimony our members collectively contributed as paediatric experts. These include:

- Establishing an office tasked with accountability for child and youth health;

- Implementing a national paediatric data and workforce strategy;
- Increasing mental health funding for children and youth;
- Fully implementing Jordan's Principle;
- Implementing child-friendly pharmacare and improving access to paediatric formulations;
- Improving continuity of care for patients transitioning from adolescence to adulthood;
- Expanding on a stepped-care approach and an integrated youth services model;
- Supporting a national autism and rare diseases strategy;
- Increasing access to care for rural and remote populations.

However, we note the missed opportunities to commit to fully implementing the Inuit Child First Initiative and to funding child and youth health research, a bedrock for advancing evidence-informed care and achieving optimal health outcomes.

The findings of the child health study unequivocally reinforce the pressing need for a national child and youth health strategy. Our organisations, collectively representing a vast network of child health experts, researchers, and advocates, firmly endorse the development of a strategy that will provide a comprehensive framework to guide the nation in addressing the critical issues impacting the health and well-being of children and youth.

We commend the parliamentary committee for undertaking this timely study, which delves into the complex challenges and opportunities surrounding child and youth health in our nation. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the committee for their dedicated efforts in engaging with our organisations throughout the study process, actively seeking our expertise and insights.

We implore the federal government to recognize the significance of HESA's recommendations and to take swift action in their implementation. It is crucial for our nation to prioritise the health and well-being of our children, as the foundation of our society's future.

The time for action is now. We call upon the federal government to allocate the necessary resources, collaborate meaningfully and effectively with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments, and mobilise relevant partnerships to ensure the immediate development and implementation of a national child and youth health strategy, as recommended by the parliamentary committee. We further urge that child and youth health priorities are addressed in the next federal, provincial and territorial health ministers meeting. By investing in the health and well-being of our children and youth, we invest in the future of our nation.

Quotes:

"The Parliamentary Child Health Study recommendations come at a critical time for Canada's kids. The report serves as an important call to action – better is possible and necessary for children and youth in this country. Children's Healthcare Canada and the Pediatric Chairs of Canada look forward to collaborating with all child health champions and the federal government to realise bold goals and ambitions spelled out in this report."- Emily Gruenwoldt, President and CEO, Children's Healthcare Canada and the Pediatric Chairs of Canada.

"HESA's child health study report reflects the testimony of paediatric health experts across the country, who see first-hand the challenges young people face every day, particularly when it comes to supporting their mental health. Enacting these recommendations will strengthen the paediatric healthcare systems and ensure a healthier future for the next generation. – Marie Adèle Davis, Executive Director, Canadian Paediatric Society

"We must advocate with a unified voice across all professions and take action to address Canada's overworked and deficient child and youth healthcare system. The population we serve, their families, and paediatric nurses across Canada are facing systemic trauma on a daily basis. It is critical that we come together using HESA's child health study, and all tools at our disposal, to make child and youth health in Canada not just effective but groundbreaking." – Jonathan Honsberger, President of the Canadian Association of Paediatric Nurses.