



## COVID-19 pandemic highlights need for #HealthCare4All

TO: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health  
The Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship

CC: Premiers and Ministers of Health of all provinces & territories

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted long-standing gaps in the Canadian healthcare system that continue to disproportionately and negatively impact vulnerable communities. Despite Canada's proclaimed universal healthcare system, migrant workers, individuals without status, rejected refugee claimants, and others, are left uninsured, facing fear of deportation and insurmountable debt in accessing healthcare. Healthcare is a human right, yet it is not guaranteed for hundreds of thousands of individuals in Canada. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that our community wellbeing is highly interconnected, and we place our entire society at risk by failing to guarantee health care to all people. **As members of the health and migrant communities, we call on Canada's federal government to work closely with provincial and territorial governments, health institutions, and public health leaders to ensure and support access to healthcare for all people living in Canada, including those currently living in detention, regardless of immigration and citizenship status.**

In response to the pandemic, some provinces have begun acknowledging the harms of limiting access to healthcare for uninsured communities by temporarily expanding some types of coverage, largely through making an artificial distinction between COVID-19 related services and others (see <https://bit.ly/2WoRj5C>). This is not enough. There is significant variability in how COVID-19 presents, making it difficult for healthcare providers to know what constitutes a COVID-19 related service - this false distinction is harmful as it may lead to missed testing and treatment and increased community transmission. Full and comprehensive coverage of all services will also ease the administrative burden on frontline healthcare providers working to control this pandemic, rather than having them waste time with bureaucratic gatekeeping. **To effectively "flatten the curve", policy must ensure universal access to all essential health services.**

**The national response on this issue has also been fragmented, with only some provinces beginning to provide care for some uninsured individuals, and policy implementation being incomplete in healthcare institutions.** Patients are still being forced to navigate complicated pathways to access care, and many continue to be denied access to essential healthcare services, both COVID-19 related and otherwise. Uninsured individuals across Canada require universal access to healthcare that is effectively implemented from the level of policy to the patient experience - inconsistency only serves to create further inequity and confusion within an existing patchwork-system.

The threat of detention and deportation faced by undocumented individuals who seek essential healthcare services at all times, but particularly during this pandemic, must be addressed. Though deportation has been temporarily halted at the policy level, with some exceptions, there is an ongoing fear that access to health care services could result in detention and deportation by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) in the future. This fear results in many uninsured individuals regularly avoiding or delaying seeking care. **It is important that health care institutions affirm in their patient privacy policies that they will not share information with the CBSA, and that the CBSA affirm that attempting to access healthcare will not result in detention or deportation.**

Finally, these changes have been announced as temporary measures for the COVID-19 crisis. This is in direct opposition to what healthcare professionals, international human rights bodies, and community organizations have repeatedly said: denying healthcare on the basis of immigration status is a human rights violation and threat to public health. Ensuring access to health care for migrants improves the health and safety for all communities in Canada; it leads to reduced health care costs and improved health outcomes. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has condemned Canada in the past for denying access to essential healthcare on the basis of immigration status, based on the case of Nell Toussaint. **We must not be short-sighted - equitable access to healthcare is always essential, not only during crises such as COVID-19.**

**We demand that the Canadian federal government work closely with provincial and territorial governments, health institutions, and public health leaders to immediately ensure comprehensive healthcare coverage to all.** This can only be achieved when:

1. Healthcare coverage is comprehensive, covering all medically-necessary services, and does not make the artificial and harmful distinction between COVID-19 related services and others;
2. All healthcare institutions are informed of the policy details and how they will be implemented, including coverage changes, the application of billing codes, and confidentiality policies that prevent sharing personal health information or collaborating with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA). This messaging must reach all workers interacting with patients in addition to healthcare providers;
3. An explicit public messaging campaign informing all uninsured communities and the broader public that all healthcare services are available at no charge regardless of immigration status;
4. The CBSA guarantees that accessing healthcare will not result in detention or deportation;
5. Healthcare coverage is permanent, carrying on beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, as a human rights and public health measure.

*This letter is endorsed by the undersigned.*

**MIGRANT  
RIGHTS  
NETWORK**



CANADIAN DOCTORS  
FOR MEDICARE | MÉDECINS CANADIENS  
POUR LE RÉGIME PUBLIC



**OHIP FOR ALL**  
Healthier Together

**ASSOCIATION  
MÉDICALE  
CANADIENNE**



**CANADIAN  
MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION**



Canadian  
Health Coalition



Coalition canadienne  
de la santé

Canadian  
Paediatric  
Society



Société  
canadienne  
de pédiatrie



**ONTARIO  
PSYCHIATRIC  
ASSOCIATION**



**COLLABORATIVE NETWORK  
TO END EXPLOITATION**



**Action Canada  
for Sexual Health & Rights**



CANADIAN FEDERATION  
OF NURSES UNIONS  
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE  
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES  
ET INFIRMIERS



**FEMC**  
Fédération des étudiants et des  
étudiantes en médecine du Canada



Carrefour  
d'éducation populaire  
de Pointe St-Charles



**mepacq**

**CANADIAN  
CIVIL LIBERTIES  
ASSOCIATION**



**ASSOCIATION  
CANADIENNE DES  
LIBERTES CIVILES**



**Health for All Now!  
People's Health Movement  
Canada**



**Conseil Migrant**







**ACCESSS**

Alliance des Communautés Culturelles pour  
l'Égalité dans la Santé et les Services Sociaux



Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre



CENTRE DE PÉDIATRIE  
SOCIALE DE SAINT-LAURENT  
*Au coeur de l'enfance*

MEMBRE DU RÉSEAU



**MiGRANTE**  
alberta



**DECENT WORK &  
HEALTH NETWORK**



Global Migration  
& Health Initiative



**PHAS**

Mouvement PHAS  
Personnes handicapées  
pour l'accès aux services



VANCOUVER & DISTRICT  
LABOUR COUNCIL

**#ahs4all**  
ALBERTA HEALTHCARE FOR ALL



*Sisters of St. Joseph*



**unifor**  
theUnion | lesyndicat



**MRCC**  
Migrants Resource Centre Canada



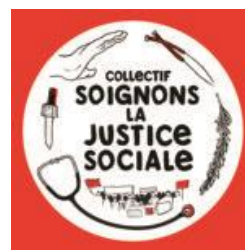
COALITION DES ORGANISMES COMMUNAUTAIRES  
QUÉBÉCOIS DE LUTTE CONTRE LE SIDA

Membre de la Coalition Internationale Sida



ASSOCIATION POUR LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DU PERSONNEL DOMESTIQUE/ADDPD  
ASSOCIATION FOR THE RIGHTS OF HOUSEHOLD WORKERS/ARHW

**HEALTH  
PROVIDERS  
AGAINST  
POVERTY**







**TCRI**

Table de concertation  
des organismes au service  
des personnes réfugiées  
et immigrantes

40 ans



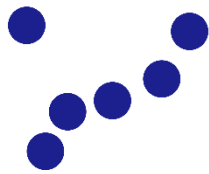
**CUPE-SCFP**



RÉSEAU DES  
TABLES RÉGIONALES  
DE GROUPES DE FEMMES  
DU QUÉBEC



The Coalition Against More Surveillance



**OMSA**

Ontario Medical  
Students Association

**AÉMO**

Association des étudi-  
de médecine de l'Ont

**IAVGO**  
Community Legal  
Clinic

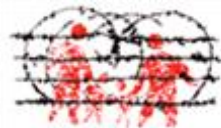


**canadian centre  
on statelessness**



**WOMEN'S HEALTH  
IN WOMEN'S HANDS  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE  
INCREASE • INNOVATE • IGNITE**

**SALCO**  
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario



**Conseil canadien pour les réfugiés  
Canadian Council for Refugees**



**OCASI**  
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants



**LE CENTRE DE RÉFUGIÉ  
THE REFUGEE CENTRE**



**CASSIA**  
COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS



**LDL**

Ligue des  
droits et libertés



Regroupement des Aidants  
et Aidants Naturels  
de Montréal

# UNA SINGA

United Nurses of Alberta

QUÉBEC

## MIGRANT WORKERS

Alliance for Change



**firstcall**  
BC CHILD AND YOUTH  
ADVOCACY COALITION



Moelle épinière  
et motricité Québec

Réinventer l'autonomie



Alliance for Healthier Communities  
Alliance pour des communautés en santé



**MIGRANTE**  
**ONTARIO**



AGIDD-SMQ

ASSOCIATION DES GROUPE D'INTERVENTION  
EN DÉFENSE DES DROITS EN SANTÉ MENTALE  
DU QUÉBEC

**KEEPING  
SIX  
HAMILTON**

**TOMS**

TABLE DES ORGANISMES COMMUNAUTAIRE  
MONTREALAIS DE LUTTE CONTRE LE SIDA



**SENIORS  
CENTRE  
SOCIETY**



**BC  
CLA** BRITISH COLUMBIA  
**CIVIL LIBERTIES**  
ASSOCIATION



**CENTRE ON  
DRUG POLICY  
EVALUATION**

Formerly the International Centre for Science in Drug Policy



SERVICE JÉSUIT DES RÉFUGIÉS  
CANADA



**Refuge**  
Hamilton Centre  
for **Newcomer Health**



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES  
CENTRES DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE



**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES**



**COMPASSIONATE**  
KENORA

**CENTRE FOR  
GENDER & SEXUAL  
HEALTH EQUITY**



**NORTHERN  
CONNECTIONS**





APUO

ASSOCIATION DES PROFESSEUR(E)S DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA  
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA



Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op



edlc.ca f t @EdmLabour



La Table



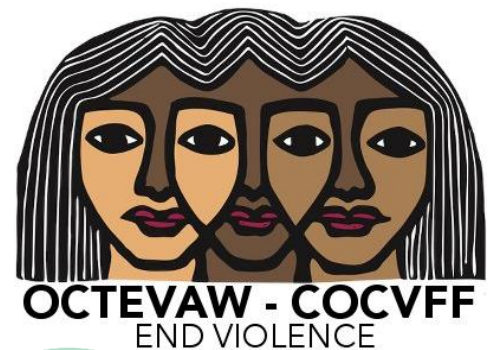
des regroupements provinciaux  
d'organismes communautaires et bénévoles

CENTRE DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE  
PINECREST-QUEENSWAY  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE



BCHealth Coalition

PIVOT  
LEGAL SOCIETY





**Chatham-Kent  
Community Health Centres**  
Centres de santé communautaire de  
Chatham-Kent

**Halifax  
Refugee Clinic**



**Asociación de  
Mexicanos**  
EN CALGARY



**The  
Obstetric  
Justice Project**  
Canada



**RAINBOW  
REFUGEE**



**CAWI-IVTF**  
City for All Women Initiative  
Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes



**Hope Centre  
Health Care Inc.**



**RAINBOW  
REFUGEE**

**VANCOUVER**



MILLENNIAL WOMXN IN POLICY



**DIVERSEcity**  
community resources society



**Hamilton Community Legal Clinic**  
Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton



**Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres**



**WellFort**



**Seaway Valley  
Community Health Centre**

*Working with you for a Healthier Community*

**MOUVEMENT  
SANTÉ MENTALE  
QUÉBEC**



Promouvoir. Soutenir. Outiller.



**House of  
Friendship**



**La  
Maison  
d'Haïti**



**CAOT-ACE**

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists  
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes



**London  
InterCommunity  
Health Centre**





Les Oblates Franciscaines  
de Saint-Joseph



Immigration  
Partnership  
Winnipeg



**Ontario**  
**Health Coalition**  
Protecting public healthcare for all.



**Cabinet Laval**  
Avocats en immigration



**JMPSP**

Jeunes médecins pour  
la santé publique



**SERY**  
SOLIDARITÉ ETHNIQUE RÉGIONALE  
DE LA YAMASKA



Comité  
d'aide  
aux  
réfugiés



**AQAADI**



**CENTRE FRANCOPHONE  
DU GRAND TORONTO**

Accredited by  
Canadian Centre  
for Accreditation



Agéré par  
Centre canadien  
de l'agrément



Association québécoise  
des organismes de  
coopération internationale



Pediatric Chairs of Canada  
Directeurs de pédiatrie du Canada



Children's  
Healthcare  
Canada

Santé  
des enfants  
Canada



College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)  
 Medical Student Society of McGill University  
 Migrant Workers Alliance - Niagara  
 FIQ Syndicat des professionnelles en soins de Montérégie Ouest  
 MCC Toronto's LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs  
 Ometz: Community Services, Employment, and Immigration  
 Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2424  
 Service d'accueil des nouveaux arrivants de La Matanie (SANAM)  
 Concertation itinérance Beauharnois-Salaberry Suroit  
 PEI Working Group for a Livable Income  
 Centre ressources pour femmes de Beauport  
 International Retinoblastoma Consortium  
 Micah House Refugee Reception  
 Rainbow New Beginnings  
 Action santé Outaouais en partenariat avec la Table de développement social de la Vallée de la Gatineau  
 WazanaLaw  
 La Maisonnée  
 Casa C.A.F.I. (Centre d'aide aux familles Immigrantes)  
 Northumberland Community Legal Centre  
 East End Community Health Centre  
 Judy Waldman Counselling and Consulting  
 Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie  
 Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loretto Sisters, Canada)  
 RÉCIFS (Regroupement de personnes qui exercent la profession d'intervenantes sociales au Québec)  
 Kenora Seniors Coalition  
 Quaker Refugee Committee of Toronto Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends  
 Regency Nannies Inc.