

With Omicron rising, federal government rightly focuses on COVID fight

December 14, 2021 (Ottawa) – Today’s federal fiscal update delivered by Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland provided welcome funding for measures to support Canada’s fight against COVID-19.

The federal government is rightly focusing on the threat posed by the Omicron variant in this latest fiscal update, directing additional funding toward the tools that will best help Canada respond by procuring more COVID-19 vaccines, getting more rapid tests to Canadians, making community buildings and public spaces safer through improved air quality, and injecting \$405 million next year to the Public Health Agency of Canada to bolster public health.

While the measures outlined in the economic and fiscal update will go a long way to help Canada respond to the Omicron variant, the short-term focus of the spending detailed in the fiscal update means that many of the health system concerns spotlighted by the pandemic remain to be addressed.

“After nearly two years, multiple waves of COVID cases, and the Omicron variant, Canada’s healthcare system and those who work in it are in desperate need,” said Paul-Émile Cloutier, HealthCareCAN President and CEO. “Our political leaders must urgently come together to implement solutions to the challenges facing healthcare and health research.”

HealthCareCAN was heartened to hear that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau planned to meet with all First Ministers to discuss addressing the challenges faced by Omicron, and hoped the discussion included ways to address other critical healthcare issues left out of the fiscal update.

“Canada urgently needs a national health workforce planning strategy, better availability and access to mental health supports for people across Canada, enhanced long-term care, and sustainable and consistent funding for both public health and health research,” added Mr. Cloutier. “These issues must be front and centre when the Prime Minister and Premiers meet.”

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