



-for immediate release-

Survey reveals how healthcare professionals of all types are grappling with a variety of coronavirus challenges simultaneously.

HEAL forms a COVID-19 Task Force to optimize collaboration with the government and to help disseminate accurate messaging within the sector and to the public

(OTTAWA – March 25, 2020) Today, the Organizations for Health Action (HEAL) released the findings of its survey of member health organizations, conducted late last week, revealing that the Canadian healthcare sector is abruptly facing a variety of challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results also indicate that HEAL members – made up of 40-member associations collectively representing over 650,000 healthcare providers across Canada – are united in calling on the federal government to play an enhanced leadership role regarding the crisis.

“We are seeing that there are many incredibly challenging issues at play right now, both for those on the frontlines of healthcare delivery, as well as for those who would normally work in a clinical or community setting,” said HEAL Co-Chair François Couillard.

“Their concerns range from the growing scarcity of personal protective equipment, to clinic closures, to the postponement of certification exams and student placements. All of these issues will likely have serious short-term and long-term impacts on the healthcare sector, and as result on the Canadian public as a whole,” said Couillard.

When asked to identify issues with which their respective healthcare members were most concerned, 78% of organizations said, “exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, and the risk it poses to frontline workers and by extension, to their families.”

Other common concerns included, “mental health of their employees, colleagues, and themselves, working on the frontlines of the outbreak,” according to 67% of participating organizations. An equal number said they were concerned about the “likely loss of income due to clinic shutdowns, including impact on their employees, as well as eligibility for EI concerns.”

Nearly two thirds of respondents mentioned the “growing scarcity of protective equipment required to carry out their professional duties in the next few weeks or months (i.e. masks, gloves).”

“We understand that enhanced coordination and collaboration amongst healthcare stakeholders will be critical to addressing this pandemic as effectively as possible,” said HEAL Co-Chair H el ene Sabourin.

“As a result, HEAL has created a special COVID-19 task force to ensure that the health providers it collectively represents are well informed and equipped to effectively respond to the pandemic, and that communications among all levels of government – federal, provincial, territorial and municipal – and providers flows quickly and accurately as this crisis unfolds,” said Sabourin.

HEAL is already engaging regularly with senior officials from the Public Health Agency of Canada as well as with the office of The Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health.

HEAL said it is grateful for the federal government's rapid response to this unprecedented challenge, and its deference to Canada's healthcare experts.

“We look forward to working very closely with Dr. Tam's and Minister Hajdu's respective teams in the coming weeks and months,” said Couillard. “We are all in this together, and failure is not an option.”

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HEAL, Organizations for Health Action, is a coalition of 40 national health organizations dedicated to improving the health of Canadians and the quality of care they receive. Our members are professional associations of regulated health care providers and organizations of health charities that provide a range of health care services across Canada. HEAL now represents more than 650,000 providers (and consumers) of health care.

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