

Economic Club of Canada

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BETTER HEALTH FOR BETTER PROSPERITY: This exclusive event with The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Canada's Minister of Health, took place on June 8th in Toronto.

Key takeaways

- Our recent experience with the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the integral link between the health of a population and its prosperity.
- The evolving geopolitical context, an aging population, climate change, the loss of biodiversity and emerging health threats like antimicrobial resistance are adding to the numerous health challenges we are facing.
- An improved and more resilient health system can be an economic and societal game changer.
- Targeted investments focused on prevention, health equity, data, innovation, planning and improved health worker supports lead to better overall health outcomes, which promote economic growth by supporting Canada's workforce and by boosting productivity.

PANDEMIC

- The pandemic's long-term social and economic impacts are clearer today and groups have suffered disproportionately, including already vulnerable and marginalized workers, Indigenous and racialized people and seniors.
- We are also learning the deep and complex toll of Post-COVID Condition (long COVID)—this condition could be affecting as many as 1.4 million Canadians, with a profound effect on our labour force.
- The U.S. economist David Cutler has estimated that the economic burden of 10 million people with three or more symptoms of long COVID would be \$3.7 trillion because of lost quality of life, lost earnings and higher health care costs. But we also know that it could have been much, much worse.
- A [study by the C.D. Howe Institute](#) found that each day of delay in Canada's vaccination would have cost the Canadian economy \$1 billion.

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- According [to research by the Canadian Institute for Health Information](#), 937,000 fewer surgeries were performed during the first 31 months of the pandemic – that’s a decline of 14%.

HEALTHY POPULATION = HEALTHY ECONOMY

- Economists estimate that about [one-third of economic growth in advanced economies in the past century](#) can be attributed to improvements in the health of populations.
- A healthy population can help grow the economy.
- Promoting public health allows us to quickly address health emergencies through measures like vaccination campaigns.
- Preventing chronic disease means addressing the social determinants of health and supporting healthy lifestyles; it means promoting good health through progressive social policies
- Strengthening the healthcare system ensures it can support Canadians as they age.
- The pandemic has exposed deep vulnerabilities in our healthcare systems and one of those vulnerabilities is the health workforce.
- According to RBC, Canada will be short 44,000 doctors by 2028. About 70% of those will be family doctors who are usually the first to provide care, treat and diagnose Canadians.
- An analysis conducted in 2018 also anticipated a shortage of more than 100,000 nurses by the year 2030. And that was before the pandemic.
- Strengthening the health workforce is essential.
- Budget 2023 delivers a 10-year additional investment of close to \$200 billion in the healthcare system. This funding will support provinces and territories in advancing five areas of shared priority.
 - Expanding access to family health services, especially in rural and remote areas;
 - Supporting health workers and reducing surgical backlogs;
 - Increasing support for mental health and substance use, especially for younger Canadians;
 - Better use of, and access to health data; and
 - Helping Canadians age with dignity.

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INNOVATION

- The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a new period of health innovation – from the widespread adoption of virtual care to new product developments like vaccines and treatments.
- After a forty-year decline, Canada’s domestic biomanufacturing industry is being rebuilt. We are also seeing exciting innovations in nanotechnology and artificial intelligence.
- Canada is becoming a global leader in targeted nanoparticle delivery technology.
- The use of artificial intelligence is also accelerating exponentially target drug discovery.
- With novel treatments being developed every day, there is also new hope for people suffering from rare diseases.
- We must also ensure that these treatments – which are often expensive – are accessible to those who need them most.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Each year, 15,300 Canadians die prematurely due to air pollution. In addition to the heavy emotional burden of these premature deaths, we estimate the economic cost of these deaths to be 6% of Canada's real gross domestic product.
- The economy, the environment and geopolitical security are all interrelated—Climate change and pollution are having increasingly negative consequences – both on the planet and on the health and well-being of people around the world, including in Canada. We must act now to limit the consequences of pollution and climate change, and to adapt to protect public health.
- Canada’s first National Adaptation Strategy invests nearly \$43 million over the next five years in programs to help the health sector adapt to a changing climate and protect the health of Canadians.

ANTI-MICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Canada needs to be prepared for the “silent pandemic” of antimicrobial resistance.

Antibiotics are becoming less effective as drug resistance spreads globally. Life expectancy would drop by a third if effective antibiotics did not exist.

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Antimicrobial resistance has significant impacts on our health and the economy. In 2018, 5,400 deaths or 15 deaths per day in Canada were attributable to antimicrobial resistance and cost the Canadian healthcare system an estimated \$1.4 billion.

Canada has released the Pan-Canadian Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance—a shared five-year roadmap for concerted action on antimicrobial resistance across five pillars: Research and Innovation, Monitoring, Stewardship, Infection Prevention and Control, and Leadership.