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December 16, 2021



Dear Minister Duclos:

Thank you for agreeing to serve Canadians as Minister of Health.

From the beginning of this pandemic, Canadians have faced a once-in-a-century challenge. And through it all, from coast to coast to coast, people have met the moment. When it mattered most, Canadians adapted, helped one another, and stayed true to our values of compassion, courage and determination. That is what has defined our path through this pandemic so far. And that is what will pave our way forward.

During a difficult time, Canadians made a democratic choice. They entrusted us to finish the fight against COVID-19 and support the recovery of a strong middle class. At the same time, they also gave us clear direction: to take bold, concrete action to build a healthier, more resilient future. That is what Canadians have asked us to do and it is exactly what our Government is ready to deliver. We will work to build that brighter future through continued collaboration, engagement, and the use of science and evidence-based decision-making. With an unwavering focus on delivering results, we will work constructively with Parliamentarians and maintain our strong partnerships with provincial, territorial and municipal governments and Indigenous partners. This decade has had an incredibly difficult start, but this is the moment to rebuild a more resilient, inclusive and stronger country for everyone.

The science is clear. Canadians have been clear. We must not only continue taking real climate action, we must also move faster and go further. As Canadians are increasingly experiencing across the country, climate change is an existential threat. Building a cleaner, greener future will require a sustained and collaborative effort from all of us. As Minister, I expect you to seek opportunities within your portfolio to support our whole-of-government effort to reduce emissions, create clean jobs and address the climate-related challenges communities are already facing.

This year, Canadians were horrified by the discovery of unmarked graves and burial sites near former residential schools. These discoveries underscore that we must move faster on the path of reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. We know that reconciliation cannot come without truth and our Government will continue to invest in that truth. As Ministers, each of us has a duty to further this work, both collectively and as individuals. Consequently, I am directing every Minister to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to advance their rights.

We must continue to address the profound systemic inequities and disparities that remain present in the core fabric of our society, including our core institutions. To this effect, it is essential that Canadians in every region of the country see themselves reflected in our Government’s priorities and our work. As Minister, I expect you to include and collaborate with various communities, and actively seek out and incorporate in your work, the diverse views of Canadians. This includes women, Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized Canadians, newcomers, faith-based communities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2 Canadians, and, in both official languages.

Across our work, we remain committed to ensuring that public policies are informed and developed through an intersectional lens, including applying frameworks such as Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) and the quality of life indicators in decision-making.

Canadians continue to rely on journalists and journalism for accurate and timely news. I expect you to maintain professional and respectful relationships with journalists to ensure that Canadians are well informed and have the information they need to keep themselves and their families safe.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, Canadians and their governments have adapted to new realities. Governments must draw on lessons learned from the pandemic to further adapt and develop more agile and effective ways to serve Canadians. To this end, I expect all Ministers to evaluate ways we can update our practices to ensure our Government continues to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The success of this Parliament will require Parliamentarians, both in the House of Commons and the Senate, to work together across all parties to get big things done for Canadians. I expect you to maintain constructive relationships with your Opposition Critics and coordinate any legislation with the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. As Minister, you are accountable to Parliament both individually, for your style of leadership and the performance of your responsibilities, and collectively, in support of our Ministry and decisions taken by Cabinet. *Open and Accountable Government*sets out these core principles and the standards of conduct expected of you and your office. I expect you to familiarize yourself with this document, which outlines my expectations for each member of the Ministry.

Our platform lays out an ambitious agenda. While finishing the fight against the pandemic must remain our central focus, we must continue building a strong middle class and work toward a better future where everyone has a real and fair chance at success and no one is left behind.

As Minister of Health, your immediate priority is to help finish the fight against COVID-19, working in close cooperation with provinces and territories. As we emerge from this pandemic, I expect you to work in partnership with provinces and territories to strengthen our universal public health care system and public health supports, backed by an early increase of investments in primary and virtual care and mental health services so all Canadians can get the care they need no matter where they live. Collaboration with provinces and territories will be key to ensuring the primary care system is positioned for the future, including accessible health system data, as well as working to improve the quality and availability of long-term care.

To realize these objectives, I ask that you achieve results for Canadians by delivering the following commitments.

* Continue to provide leadership to finish the fight against COVID-19, including by:
  + Working with colleagues, provinces and territories, municipalities, Indigenous communities and other partners to continue the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines;
  + Working with colleagues to continue to ensure sufficient domestic supply of COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics, evaluate our border posture and ensure surge capacity supports are available to assist provinces and territories;
  + Working with provinces and territories, municipalities, Indigenous organizations, the private sector and other partners to continue to ensure implementation of and adherence to public health measures, and support the availability of rapid tests and self-tests;
  + Launching a COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination Fund to support provinces and territories who implement a requirement for proof of vaccine credentials in their jurisdiction for non-essential businesses and public spaces;
  + Overseeing the Public Health Agency of Canada, ensuring they have the resources and support necessary to continue protecting the health and safety of Canadians; and
  + Continue working with the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Transport to protect the health and safety of Canadians through safe, responsible and compassionate management of the border with the United States and other ports of entry into Canada.
* Work with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to continue demonstrating leadership in public health by strengthening surveillance and capacity to detect and act on public health threats, strengthening the security of medical supply chains, working with colleagues to advance the Biomanufacturing and Life Sciences Strategy, and investing in the study of the long-term health impacts of COVID-19, including the effects of long COVID on different groups, notably vulnerable populations and children.
* With the support of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, lead our renewed commitment to work in partnership with and increase funding to provinces and territories to strengthen our universal public health system, ensure health care workers are supported and recruited across the country and advance an integrated, comprehensive and patient-centric strategy, harnessing the full potential of data and digital systems, including by:
  + Investing in supporting initiatives that will help to speed access to care for critical services;
  + Supporting provinces and territories to hire new family doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners;
  + Expanding virtual care, helping to cover digital infrastructure and other system improvements so that Canadians can access virtual medical consultations or remote monitoring;
  + Expanding the number of family doctors and primary health teams in rural communities and working to give rural communities greater access to a full suite of health and social services professionals;
  + Strengthening compliance with and modernizing the interpretation of the *Canada Health Act* on matters of extra billing for publicly insured services; and
  + In consultation with provinces and territories and a broad range of partners, expediting work to create a world-class health data system that is timely, usable, open-by-default, connected and comprehensive.
* Work with the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health and with the support of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to establish a permanent, ongoing Canada Mental Health Transfer, to help expand the delivery of high-quality, accessible and free mental health services, including for prevention and treatment.
* With the support of the Minister of Seniors, negotiate agreements with provinces and territories to support efforts to improve the quality and availability of long-term care homes and beds. This includes working with provinces and territories to improve infection prevention and control measures, identify shared principles, and develop national standards and a Safe Long-Term Care Act to ensure seniors get the care they deserve. In support of this work, you will work with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion and provinces and territories to train up to 50,000 new personal support workers and raise wages.
* With the support of the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, work to ensure that all Canadians have access to the sexual and reproductive health services they need, no matter where they live, by reinforcing compliance under the *Canada Health Act*, developing a sexual and reproductive health rights information portal, supporting the establishment of mechanisms to help families cover the costs of in vitro fertilization, and supporting youth-led grassroots organizations that respond to the unique sexual and reproductive health needs of young people.
* Work with the Minister of Public Safety, President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and Minister of Transport, among other colleagues, to ensure the Government of Canada continues to be prepared to proactively mitigate, and respond to, emerging incidents and hazards.
* In moving forward with a uniquely Canadian approach modeled on the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), work with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to develop a plan to modernize the federal research funding ecosystem to maximize the impact of investments in both research excellence and downstream innovation, with a particular focus on the relationships among the federal research granting agencies and the Canada Foundation for Innovation.
* With the support of the Chief Science Advisor, continue to ensure science and evidence are integrated into our pandemic response.
* With the support of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, work with the Minister of International Development to continue to reinforce international efforts to ensure that people around the world have access to health interventions to fight COVID-19, including vaccines, therapeutics and strengthened health systems.
* Work with partners to take increased and expedited action to monitor, prevent and mitigate the serious and growing threat of antimicrobial resistance and preserve the effectiveness of the antimicrobials Canadians rely upon every day.
* Continue engaging with willing provinces and territories towards national universal pharmacare, while proceeding with a national strategy on high-cost drugs for rare diseases and advancing the establishment of the Canada Drug Agency.
* To protect Canadians from harmful chemicals, strengthen the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, introduce mandatory labelling of chemicals in consumer products, introduce legislation to end testing on animals, increase testing of products for compliance with Canadian standards, and implement an action plan to protect Canadians, including firefighters, from exposure to toxic flame retardants found in household products.
* Work with the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons in their work to develop a plan to both make Parliament a more inclusive place for families and to respond with greater agility in the event of a future national health crisis.
* To ensure Canadians are protected from risks associated with the use of pesticides and to better protect human health, wildlife and the environment, modernize and strengthen the *Pest Control Products Act* to ensure it supports transparency, use of independent scientific evidence and input to the decision-making process.
* Recognizing that a healthy population is key to reducing vulnerability to health events, promote healthy eating by advancing the Healthy Eating Strategy. This includes finalizing the front-of-package labelling to promote healthy food choices and supporting restrictions on the commercial marketing of food and beverages to children.
* In support of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care system, continue to invest in Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities Program.
* In this, the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), promote seniors’ physical and mental health to enable them to live longer at home, including by supporting the Minister of Seniors in their work to establish an expert panel to provide recommendations for establishing an Aging at Home Benefit.
* In collaboration with provinces, territories, families and stakeholders, accelerate the development of the National Autism Strategy.

As Minister, you are also responsible for actively engaging with your Cabinet and Caucus colleagues. As we deliver on our platform commitments, it will be important that members of the Ministry continue to collaborate and work constructively to support rigorous and productive Cabinet decision-making. I expect you to support your colleagues in delivering their commitments, leveraging the expertise of your department and your own lived experiences.

To best achieve results for Canadians, Ministers must be rigorous and coordinated in our approach to implementation. I would therefore ask that you return to me with a proposed approach for the delivery of your mandate commitments, including priorities for early implementation. Furthermore, to ensure we are accountable for our work, I will be asking you to publicly report to me, and all Canadians, on your progress toward these commitments on a regular basis.

As we have been reminded throughout the pandemic, adapting to change is not only something government should do, it is something government must do. As you work to fulfil our commitments, I expect you to actively consider new ideas and issues as they emerge, whether through public engagement, your work with Parliamentarians or advice from the public service. I also expect you to work with your Deputy Minister to assess priorities on a continual basis as we build a better future for all Canadians. In addition to achieving results, you are responsible for overseeing the work of your department and ensuring the effective operation of your portfolio.

As you staff your office and implement outreach and recruitment strategies for federally appointed leadership positions and boards, I ask that you uphold the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. This helps ensure that federal workplaces are dynamic and reflective of the Canadians we serve. You will also ensure your Minister’s office and portfolio are reflective of our commitment to healthy and safe workplaces.

Canadians expect us to work hard, speak truthfully and be committed to advancing their interests and aspirations. When we make mistakes – as we all will – Canadians expect us to acknowledge them, and most importantly, to learn from them.

I know I can count on you to fulfill the important responsibilities entrusted in you, and to turn to me, and the Deputy Prime Minister, early and often to support you in your role as Minister.

Sincerely,

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada

\*This Ministerial Mandate Letter was signed by the Prime Minister in the Minister’s first official language.