

# Health care must be key issue in Canada's federal election

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Health care is a major responsibility of Canada's federal government and must be a key issue in the fall election, argues Dr. Matthew Stanbrook in an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

"The [federal government](#) seems to be trying to get itself out of the health care business," states Dr. Stanbrook, deputy editor, *CMAJ*. "It cannot. Many essential aspects of health care are a federal responsibility, and our biggest, most complex problems in the health care system cannot be solved without federal leadership."

He argues that over most of the last 10 years, the federal government has distanced itself from federal health policy, to the detriment of Canadians.

"Recent years have seen Canada's health care system race to the bottom of quality rankings compared with peer nations that have prudently invested in maintaining a strong social safety net."

Cutbacks in health care research funding, the nonrenewal of the Canada Health Accord, the weakening of the [public health agency](#)'s authority, and slow movement on tobacco control and asbestos elimination indicate the lack of interest in health care as a priority.

A federal government that makes [health care](#) a priority could help improve Canadians' variable access to primary care, [mental health services](#), and new treatments for cancers and rare diseases as well as

create a national pharmacare program.

"Focused national strategies could make real strides toward addressing such problems, which are too big for many provinces to effectively cope with on their own."

Every federal party should have clear, effective, thoughtful health policy platforms, and voters should assess these when casting their votes.

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal*,  
[www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.150896](http://www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.150896)

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