

To the Editor: *The Globe and Mail*

**Elect health care as your reason to vote**

The Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Medical Association see the May 2nd election as one of the most important milestones for the future of our health system since the adoption of medicare. Although all major political parties have pledged a 6% increase in federal health transfer payments to the provinces and territories, Canada's doctors and nurses know that money alone cannot fix what is ailing health care today – nor will it prepare us for the health system challenges of tomorrow.

Several emerging trends signal that our health system is at a critical juncture, one that requires strong federal leadership on the issue of health system reform. Our aging population, the alarming rise in chronic disease and an increasingly serious shortage of health professionals require a forward-looking plan of action that protects medicare and ensures that our publicly funded health-care system meets the future needs of Canadians. The government elected next week will likely lead negotiations for Canada's next 10-year health accord with the provinces and territories. This agreement represents a crucial window of opportunity to engage the entire health-care community in the renewal of our health system.

Canada's nurses and doctors invite Canadians to carefully examine the health-care platforms of the various parties. Whatever they decide, it is particularly important that all eligible citizens make the effort to exercise their right to vote. A high voter turnout sends a strong message to our politicians that Canadians are paying attention to important issues such as health care – and that the issues matter enough for us to take action at the ballot box.



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