



## It's report card time!

### *The CFPC's role in health policy*

**Francine Lemire** MD MCM CCFP FCFP CAE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Colleagues,

Several years ago, as part of a survey, members expressed a wish for their College to play a greater role in health policy and advocacy. They recognized that provincial medical associations, as well as other professional associations they belonged to, were involved in this area; however, they believed there was a need for an additional voice with a specific lens on family medicine and family practice. This has led, over a period of several years, to more dedicated energy as part of College-wide initiatives. A number of documents have been produced that articulate the role of the family physician, and of family practice in general, in a strong health care system (eg, the Patient's Medical Home; the role of the family physician in public health). The College is also invited to provide representatives on committees and working groups that influence health policy in areas relevant to the care provided by family physicians (eg, the group created under the auspices of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse examining prescription drug misuse; ongoing consultations with Health Canada on medical marijuana). Your College has made presentations to government as well, in areas relevant to the care family physicians provide (eg, presentation to a Senate committee regarding end-of-life care; presentation to the Standing Committee on Health on prescription drug abuse). The College also offers comment on the effects of certain bills presented by Members of Parliament in the House of Commons (eg, a bill addressing sodium, a bill on drug shortages).

Last fall, the College released its Report Card,<sup>1</sup> grading the role of the federal government in several areas pertaining to health care. Using the best evidence available, we ranked the government's performance—assigning green-, yellow-, or red-light ratings depending on the degree of engagement and performance—in 5 areas deemed important to the health of Canadians:

- putting care front and centre;
- caring for the most vulnerable;
- having enough health care providers; establishing the vision for health care and measuring performance; and
- supporting health care research.

You can view the full Report Card online ([www.cfpc.ca/uploadedFiles/Health\\_Policy/\\_PDFs/CFPC\\_FederalReportCard2013\\_EN.pdf](http://www.cfpc.ca/uploadedFiles/Health_Policy/_PDFs/CFPC_FederalReportCard2013_EN.pdf)).<sup>1</sup> We want to emphasize that this exercise is not about scolding the government, but rather about engagement and about the CFPC and its members being part of the solution. You will also note that several measures of performance relate to the social determinants of health. As family doctors, we know the negative effects that poverty and homelessness have on one's health. We believe that the government can substantially influence how we as a society address these issues. We reiterate the importance of each Canadian having a family doctor and emphasize the concept of the Patient's Medical Home. The CFPC also supports the development of a national health strategy and of measurable national health goals. Canada cannot have a long-term vision for health care without a national health strategy.

We had the opportunity to discuss the Report Card with members of every federal political party in September 2013. Although health care is administered provincially, the federal government has a role to play in establishing national standards for care; upholding such standards; creating national programs to meet the needs of Canadians; and providing adequate funding to providers and programs that develop, watch over, and deliver our health care. We intend to review the federal government's performance using the same measures during the 2014 and 2015 legislative sessions and in the months leading up to the 2015 federal general election. Canadians should have the best health care from coast to coast to coast. Every Canadian should be able to access excellent care provided by expert health care providers. We invite you to be part of this conversation. Review the report, inform yourself, and engage your local politicians and leaders in discussions about our health care system. For further information and feedback, please contact our health policy department at [healthpolicy@cfpc.ca](mailto:healthpolicy@cfpc.ca). 🌿

#### Acknowledgment

I thank Mr Eric Mang, Director of Health Policy and Government Relations, for his review of and feedback on this article.

#### Reference

1. College of Family Physicians of Canada. *The role of the federal government in health care. Report card 2013*. Mississauga, ON: College of Family Physicians of Canada; 2013.

\*\*\*

Cet article se trouve aussi en français à la page 299.