



National Association
of Federal Retirees

Association nationale
des retraités fédéraux

May 28, 2019.

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor. P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0K9

Dear Minister,

The National Association of Federal Retirees is the largest advocacy organization representing active and retired members of the federal public service, Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and retired federally appointed judges, as well as their spouses and survivors.

With 176,000 members nationally, including more than 60,000 veterans and their families, and 60,000 members in Ontario alone, the Association has been advocating for improvements to the financial security, health and well-being of our members and all Canadians for over 50 years.

Federal Retirees was surprised and concerned to learn of the Ontario government's decision to eliminate the Out-of-Country (OOC) Travellers Program under Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP).

The Auditor General noted in the recent audit that the OOC Traveller's Program has high administrative costs and recommended the government seek ways to reduce administrative costs. Federal Retirees agree that updates are needed to improve our health care, and appreciate the need to address the inefficiencies in this program. However, neither these facts nor the Auditor General's report justify a proposal to scrap the program in its entirety.

Federal Retirees believe that a provincial health care system must provide accessible, quality care for its residents with the best value for money. However, eliminating this program may put this at risk. Furthermore, eliminating this program is likely not allowed under the Canada Health Act.

The Canada Health Act outlines requirements that provinces and territories must fulfill, including five program criteria that apply to insured health services. It is our understanding under the portability criterion of the Canada Health Act, that provinces and territories are required to continue coverage for insured health service to residents during temporary absences outside of the country at the home



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province/territory rate. This coverage is available should an urgent or emergent need arise when away from home while on vacation or on business.

We recognize that the Out-of-Country Travellers Program is unlikely to provide full coverage for Ontarians' medical expenses when abroad. We encourage our members to seek private travel insurance when travelling out of the country. However, there are consequences for Ontarians with the elimination of out-of-country coverage under OHIP, including higher premiums for private insurance and risks for those who cannot afford private insurance at all.

This move also sets a dangerous precedent and puts public health care at risk across the country. We do not want to see other provinces and territories following suit.

Federal Retirees has written to the Government of Ontario to request that it withdraw this proposal.

We respectfully request that your office also review this matter in light of the Canada Health Act, and encourage the Ontario government to reconsider the elimination of the OHIP Out-of-Country Travellers Program.

Sincerely,

Jean-Guy Soulière
President, National Association of Federal Retirees

C.c.: The Honourable Filomena Tassi, P.C., M.P., Minister of Seniors