



BCRHN

British Columbia
Rural Health Network

OPEN LETTER

January 29, 2026

The Right Honourable Mark Carney

Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

Re: FIFA 2026, reasonable access to care, and the Canada Health Act – a preventable access failure is forming in plain sight

Prime Minister Carney,

As Parliament returns this week, I am writing on behalf of rural and remote communities in British Columbia and the organizations working to protect equitable access to medically necessary care.

Canada is preparing to welcome the world for the FIFA World Cup this summer, with matches in Vancouver and Toronto. This is a rare opportunity to show leadership and competence on the international stage. It is also a predictable stress test for our health system, and for whether we intend to honour the promise Canadians believe we have made to one another.

Travel for specialized care is a reality rural and remote patients live with. The growing problem is that the supports that make that travel feasible are eroding. Accommodation costs and availability, combined with fragmented navigation and limited backup options, are creating non-clinical paywalls that increasingly determine who can reach care. At a time of financial insecurity for many Canadians, this is exactly when the Canada Health Act's promise of reasonable access should matter most. This summer's FIFA World Cup is a predictable stress test that will magnify these barriers unless governments act now.

When patients cannot secure an affordable place to stay near hospitals and specialty clinics, appointments are missed or delayed, clinical pathways are interrupted, and outcomes can worsen. In high-acuity pathways, lives can be at stake. That is not a tourism issue. It is an access to care issue.

In your remarks ahead of the spring sitting, you spoke about the strengths Canadians value in our public systems and the importance of ensuring comparable public services, including healthcare, for Canadians across the country. You highlighted progress made through national initiatives like dental care and other measures that strengthen social supports. Those are important steps. But they do not resolve the core reality that reasonable access to medically necessary care can still collapse when the real-world costs of reaching care are left to individual households to absorb.

Why this is a Canada Health Act issue

The Canada Health Act's accessibility principle is clear in its intent: provincial plans must ensure reasonable access to insured services and must not allow access to be impeded, directly or indirectly, by charges or other barriers. When accommodation becomes the barrier that prevents people from reaching insured care, the system is no longer operating as Canadians believe it should.

A message that tells patients to “plan ahead” is not a plan. It shifts responsibility onto people who are already carrying the weight of illness, caregiving, disability, distance, and financial strain. It also ignores the reality that many clinical pathways cannot be rescheduled around market dynamics.

Why federal leadership is essential

We recognize the constitutional reality that provinces deliver and administer insured care. We are not asking the federal government to manage Vancouver hotel rates.

We are asking the Government of Canada to lead where it can and must: convene provinces and territories, align national expectations, and ensure federal health funding agreements support real, measurable access. This is exactly the kind of intergovernmental challenge that requires national leadership, especially when predictable events will intensify risk.

What we are asking the Government of Canada to do now

We are asking you to take three practical steps immediately:

1. **Convene an urgent federal, provincial, territorial table on medical travel and accommodation access**, starting with readiness for summer 2026, and extending to a durable long-term approach for predictable surge periods.
2. **Use federal health funding agreements and related mechanisms to require measurable access supports** for medically necessary out-of-town care, including navigation, escalation pathways, and accommodation solutions.
3. **Establish a time-limited surge-period support mechanism for host cities**, so medically necessary care is not displaced by predictable demand shocks tied to major events. This should be simple, transparent, and designed to prevent avoidable harm.

What we are doing in British Columbia

We are in constructive discussions with the Province of British Columbia. Our goal is to work with the province, health authorities, and partners to create a solution that is stable, transparent, and accountable.

We are urging the formation of a provincial working group to produce a summer 2026 readiness plan and a longer-term solution that provides long-term stability to patients required to travel for care. Charities and non-profits are essential, but their capacity rises and falls with funding cycles. Patients lose support through no fault of their own when demand spikes or funding changes.

We understand fiscal constraints. We understand restraint pressures. But austerity cannot be borne by patients who have no meaningful choice but to travel for centralized care. Cost barriers simply shift downstream into worse outcomes and higher system costs.

A practical step that can be enabled quickly

Solutions exist. The [Housing is Healthcare](#) initiative has identified a block of suites that could be secured in Vancouver during the FIFA period at a cost far below expected market pricing. This would require provincial alignment to proceed responsibly and transparently, but it demonstrates a basic point: the gap is not imagination. The gap is commitment and coordination.

Prime Minister, Canada's credibility is not measured by the pride we express in the Canada Health Act. It is measured by whether Canadians can actually reach medically necessary care without financial hardship or systemic barriers.

FIFA is a deadline we can see coming. The risks are predictable. The opportunity to act is now.

We would welcome an immediate meeting with your office and relevant officials, and we request that you convene provincial and territorial partners on an urgent, practical plan to protect reasonable access this summer and beyond.

Sincerely,

Paul Adams

Executive Director, BC Rural Health Network

RHC Education Foundation (doing business as BC Rural Health Network)

cc: All Members of Parliament in British Columbia

cc: The Honorable Marjorie Michel, Minister of Health, Canada

cc: Premier David Eby

cc: The Honourable Josie Osborne, Minister of Health, British Columbia

cc: Provincial and national media outlets

Media requests: info@bcruralhealth.org

For more information, quotes, patient stories, research and more, please visit

<https://www.housingishealthcare.ca/> and <https://bcruralhealth.org/>