FEDERAL ELECTION 2019

Universal National Pharmacare

Background

Canada is the only developed country in the world with a universal health care system that does not provide universal coverage of prescription drugs.

In 2016 Canadians spent $165 per capita on generic drugs, the second highest among OECD countries after the United States, making drugs inaccessible for many.\textsuperscript{1,2} Lack of universal drug access often causes non-adherence by patients, resulting in higher rates of hospital admissions and deaths, and increasing costs to the health care system.\textsuperscript{3,4}

- As a result, one in 10 Canadians cannot afford to take medicines as prescribed; compared to other countries, this is one of the highest rates of cost-related non-adherence of prescription drugs\textsuperscript{4}
- One million Canadians forego spending on necessities such as food and heating in order to pay for essential prescription medicines\textsuperscript{5}

The federal government should introduce a universal, single-payer, national pharmacare program

- It would lead to the greatest degree of consistency across the country. According to an Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), three-quarters (75 per cent) of Canadians support implementing a universal pharmacare program in Canada.

Increases in spending on prescription drugs have surpassed spending growth for both hospital and physician services and are now the fastest growing contributor to public health expenditures in Canada.\textsuperscript{7}
o As a strong central negotiating power, the federal government will greatly increase bargaining power and reduce the cost of prescription drugs by $3–6 billion a year9,10.

o A Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study suggests that a single-payer pharmacare program would decrease the amount spent on prescription drugs for Canadians and employers by $16.6 billion annually. While this would be an additional cost to governments of $10.4 billion a year, it would result in overall net savings of $6.1 billion annually ($160 per person in Canada), and the long-term health impacts will offset this initial investment.10

• A result of eliminating financial barriers to filling prescriptions will be significantly improved health outcomes of Canadians, especially those who currently cannot afford the prescriptions13.

Coverage for everyone in Canada

- The pharmacare plan should cover all medically necessary drugs at no cost to Canadians (no co-payments or deductibles), making it a progressive plan that truly aims to reduce inequalities and improve well-being.

- Due to high prescription costs, Canadians use their medications inappropriately or not at all; a Quebec-based study of almost “16,000 patients found that nearly one in three prescriptions were unfilled,”11 while recent research from the Mayo Clinic shows that nearly half of patients “do not take their medications as prescribed”.12

Endnotes


