



**Neighbourhood
Pharmacy**
Association of Canada

Association canadienne
**des pharmacies
de quartier**

Office of the Chief Executive Officer

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October 1, 2020

Kathryn Nowers
Director of Policy
Office of the Minister of Health
Brooke Claxton Building
70 Colombine Driveway, Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9
Kathryn.Nowers@canada.ca

RE: Rapid COVID-19 Testing

Dear Kathryn,

As the Government of Canada takes steps to prepare for the deployment of rapid point of care COVID-19 testing to help meet the surging demand across the country, community pharmacies stand ready to support broad COVID-19 testing, particularly as point of care tests – either self-administered or administered by a healthcare provider – become more widely available in Canada. We believe that pharmacies are uniquely positioned to support in the broad administration of asymptomatic COVID-19 testing as the economy continues to re-open to ensure that Canadians have convenient access to COVID-19 testing in the communities in which they live and work.

The Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (Neighbourhood Pharmacies) represents Canada's leading pharmacy organizations, including chain, banner, long-term care, specialty pharmacies, grocery chains, and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. We advocate for pharmacies' role in caring for Canadians, both behind and in front of the counter. We aim to advance healthcare for Canadians by leveraging close to 11,000 pharmacies conveniently located in virtually every community throughout the country as integral points of patient care.

Detecting, testing and responding to infectious disease is the primary tenet of public health. Community pharmacies can assist public health efforts in this area and specifically as part of the COVID-19 response. We believe that we can be an integral part of the solution to support extensive testing in the community, implement and enhance widespread vaccination to increase vaccine uptake, educate patients and enable effective data tracking and analysis.

Pharmacists in the United States, Alberta and Ontario are stepping in to provide COVID-19 testing capacity by successfully providing targeted asymptomatic testing. This increases accessibility to asymptomatic COVID-19 testing in a convenient location that is separate from

those experiencing symptoms or who have had known contact with the virus. Community pharmacies are investing in personal protective equipment and procedures to keep both staff and customers safe. We are also following all public health guidelines, such as physical distancing and requiring that masks be worn. We ask for the federal government's continued support to help provinces fund and deploy increased testing as a critical measure as we move into the latter part of 2020.

Maintaining high standards for safety and efficacy is critical and we support Canada's regulators in their review of new, more sophisticated tests. As important is minimizing the potential for improper use of tests or sampling, the risk of misinterpreting results and addressing concerns around the lack of access to professional counsel. As rapid, point of care tests are approved and become available, pharmacists are well-positioned to help safely and effectively administer and/or distribute while ensuring appropriate use of the tests, review results with the patient and consult on recommendations for self-care based on results and public health guidelines.

Further, pharmacies already have data systems recording all claims processed in the pharmacy. Currently, all public drug claims are captured through these systems. Should claims for vaccines and testing be processed through these systems – as is done for the influenza vaccine in most provinces – this data would be easily captured in the same manner and would be readily available to the provincial ministries. The data can in turn be shared with the federal government. This digital infrastructure could be leveraged to support the deployment of point of care testing to track testing, test results, and vaccination records, which would be of great value as Canada makes its way through the COVID-19 recovery phase. This also represents a first step in the further integration of this digital infrastructure with the primary care and public health network to leverage these important community resources.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss opportunities for pharmacies and pharmacy professionals to support mass testing, support data collection and tracking efforts as Canada moves toward greater adoption of point of care tests.

Please reach out to me at shanna@neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca to determine dates and times that would be convenient for you, for a teleconference or virtual meeting, to plan and discuss how pharmacy can continue to effectively support Canada's COVID-19 response, particularly as it relates to testing and immunization.

Regards,



Sandra Hanna, RPh.
Chief Executive Officer
Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada