



**Neighbourhood  
Pharmacy**  
Association of Canada

Association canadienne  
**des pharmacies  
de quartier**

**Office of the Chief Executive Officer**

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October 20, 2020

Hon. Cameron Friesen  
Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living  
302 Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

[minhsal@leg.gov.mb.ca](mailto:minhsal@leg.gov.mb.ca)

**RE: COVID-19 and Immunizations**

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (Neighbourhood Pharmacies) and our members, I want to sincerely thank you for your government's ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19. Working together with the front lines, you have helped Manitoba and Manitobans prepare for the second wave of this global pandemic. Pharmacies have stepped up to do their part too, with pharmacists and staff working long hours and often at personal risk to serve their communities and provide vital patient care without interruption.

There is even more that pharmacy can do to help. Pharmacists and pharmacies can play an increased role in the provision of vaccines to protect Canadians from seasonal flu, as well as for routine immunizations for children and adults.

Across Canada, pharmacists are already significant and direct contributors to vaccine-related public health programs for influenza and infectious disease. Their accessibility and longitudinal relationships with patients allow pharmacists to provide education and awareness, increase vaccination rates, and support adherence through multiple touchpoints over patients' life span.

We have seen significant success with pharmacist-administered influenza programs and know that pharmacists can further support public health initiatives with other vaccines. Neighbourhood Pharmacies, therefore, supports Pharmacists Manitoba's recommendation that the Government of Manitoba provide more support to enable pharmacies to provide immunization services by making it sustainable with an increased fee.

Currently, pharmacists in Manitoba receive the lowest fee (\$7) in the country for administering immunizations. This compares to \$13 in neighbouring provinces Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Manitoba's lower administration fee has contributed to the comparatively reduced participation of the province's pharmacies in vaccination programs and pharmacy delivered immunizations. Two-thirds of the 470 eligible pharmacies in the province are participating in this year's flu program, while the participation of pharmacies in Saskatchewan and Alberta is at near 100 per cent enrollment. Further, in 2019, 34 per cent of Manitobans who received their flu shot did so at community pharmacies compared to 51 per cent of Saskatchewan residents and 61 per cent of Albertans who get their flu shots at their community pharmacy. In both provinces, the accessibility and convenience provided by pharmacy-based flu programs have helped provincial governments increase their influenza immunization coverage to 33 per cent. We know Manitoba is looking to increase coverage rates over the coming years and the community pharmacy sector is poised to help.

By better supporting pharmacy administration of immunizations, the government will enable pharmacies to boost flu immunization coverage rates and support the roll out of a COVID-19 vaccine and other routine vaccines which we have seen fall behind in the first wave of the pandemic.

One of the key learnings from the first phase of this pandemic was the need to continue to provide routine and preventive health services, where possible and when safe to do so, to avoid a long-lasting system backlog and people unnecessarily risking or suffering illnesses. Pharmacists can help, employing their expertise and leveraging their convenient access to and trusted relationships with Manitobans to ensure patient needs do not fall through the cracks.

In recently conducted polling, about half of all Canadians (48 per cent) indicated that they have postponed or decided not to go to the doctor's office or a walk-in clinic because of a COVID-19-related reason. Many (40 per cent) are concerned that their child may miss routine vaccination as a result of the pandemic. Indeed, more than a third (34 per cent) of parents with kids 12 or younger have missed or postponed vaccinations because of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> We also understand that many school-based programs may be delayed or cancelled as a result of COVID-19. Pharmacies have robust vaccine supply chains in place and experience in managing vaccines and vaccination programs. Pharmacists have the expertise to help clear the backlog of routine immunizations and fill any gaps in care to ensure these important public health initiatives do not fall through the cracks.

Pharmacists currently have scope of practice to administer most routine vaccines currently offered through public health, such as Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), and most of these vaccines can be administered without a prescription. In short, there are no regulatory barriers that would prevent pharmacists from offering routine vaccines, but access to publicly-funded vaccines remains the issue.

Pharmacists can provide these vital immunizations conveniently, but it is critical to establish a model that fairly compensates pharmacists for these important services. In doing so, we can work together to continue to protect Manitobans from influenza, COVID-19 and other illnesses, as this pandemic runs its course. I am eager to continue our strong relationship with government as you take on this unprecedented challenge.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [shanna@neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca](mailto:shanna@neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca) should you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,



Sandra Hanna, RPh.  
Chief Executive Officer

cc. Karen Herd, Deputy Minister of Health | [Karen.Herd@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Karen.Herd@gov.mb.ca)  
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<sup>1</sup> Polling conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights, August 11-16, 2020. Online survey conducted among a randomly selected sample of N=1,000 Canadians who are parents with at least one child aged 16 or under.