



## **Rethink pharmacy: Ontario Pharmacy Platform launches solution to “hallway medicine”**

May 25, 2018 (TORONTO) The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) and the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (Neighbourhood Pharmacies) today announced the Ontario Pharmacy Platform -- its four-point strategy to improve healthcare in Ontario by enabling pharmacists to practise to their fullest extent.

Ontario's 16,000 pharmacists and 4,600 pharmacy technicians are located across 4,500 pharmacies across Ontario. They are the most accessible front-line healthcare providers and can alleviate healthcare pressures such as wait times in emergency rooms and physicians' offices through the following four-point strategy. The strategy would:

1. Enable patients to see a trained pharmacist close to home for the assessment and, if necessary, treatment of common ailments such as pink eye, cold sores, acne and uncomplicated skin infections, to name just a few;
2. Allow patients to receive publicly-funded immunizations, such as shingles and pneumonia vaccines for less mobile patients and seniors, from trained pharmacists who already administer flu shots and travel vaccines;
3. Ensure patients' pharmacotherapies are being appropriately monitored in real-time for potential toxicities and effectiveness through pharmacist-administered point-of-care testing such as A1C for diabetes, INR for blood disorders or lipids for cardiovascular health;
4. Provide patients with safety and clinical oversight and the advice and guidance of pharmacists by shifting the dispensing of non-combustible medicinal cannabis products to community pharmacies along with all other prescription products.

“Ontario’s pharmacy professionals have so much more to offer the people of this province – beyond their vital role in medication management,” said Mike Cavanagh, Chair, OPA Board of Directors. “I know first-hand that I am able to provide so much more care to my patients, but unfortunately, I am obliged to refer the patient to their doctor, walk-in clinic or hospital emergency room for many simple and uncomplicated services, all of which means more time and delays for the patient. By rethinking the role of our community pharmacists, and pharmacies as hubs of community healthcare, and enabling them to work to their full scope of their training and expertise, the government could surely help to alleviate many of the very real and frustrating pressures patients face every day within our precious resources and strained health system.”

These pressures include delays in getting to see a physician or nurse practitioner when they're needed, and long emergency and clinic wait times for the assessment and treatment of common, uncomplicated ailments. In relieving these and other pressures, pharmacists could free up additional capacity in other parts of the healthcare system while ensuring that excellence in medication management is maintained and enhanced.

“Our health system and the residents of Ontario need their pharmacists taking on more responsibilities – and all that is needed to create a modernized regulatory framework and the will of government, is to seize opportunities to create capacity through pharmacy, as part of a rethink of how primary care is delivered, supported by a fair, more efficient, and reasonable funding model,” said Justin Bates, CEO of the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada.

“In many other provinces, such as Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, pharmacies have become health centres where pharmacists have already been leveraged to play an expanded role in the delivery of quality, patient-focused care. Ontario is lagging behind many of these jurisdictions, and Ontarians need their pharmacists to be enabled to deliver more care close to where people live, work, and play – when they need it,” said Bates.

The Ontario Pharmacy Platform is clear with a laser-focus on the patient. Implementing measures to expand pharmacists’ abilities to provide care would enable the next Ontario government to increase capacity throughout the health system, providing alternative levels of care and capacity, in a way that is cost-effective, beneficial to patients, and supportive of a more collaborative model of enhanced inter-professional care.

Ontarians deserve the very best from their healthcare professionals, and pharmacy professionals in the province are willing and have the training and capability to do more to strengthen our healthcare system and relieve the strains and everyday frustrations patients and healthcare providers are experiencing. By rethinking pharmacy services, together we can improve health outcomes for Ontarians.

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### **About the Ontario Pharmacists Association**

The Ontario Pharmacists Association is committed to evolving the pharmacy profession, and advocating for excellence in practice and patient care. OPA is Canada’s largest advocacy organization, and professional development and drug information provider for pharmacy professionals across Ontario. By leveraging the unique expertise of pharmacy professionals, enabling them to practise to their fullest potential, and making them more accessible to patients, OPA is working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare system. The pharmacy sector plays a strong role in Ontario with an economic impact of more than \$6.3 billion across 4,500 pharmacies, employing 60,000 Ontarians.

### **About the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada**

Neighbourhood Pharmacies represents the business of pharmacy and advocates for Canada’s leading pharmacy brands who deliver high-value, quality care to Canadians. Our members come from all models including chain, banner, long-term care and specialty pharmacies as well as grocery chains and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. Our focus is on improving the delivery-of-care environment for pharmacy while fostering the right conditions for business success. By leveraging over 10,000 points of care from coast to coast, with pharmacies conveniently located in every neighbourhood across Canada, Neighbourhood Pharmacies aims to advance sustainable, equitable and excellent healthcare for all Canadians. The Neighbourhood Pharmacies platform brings a pan-Canadian perspective with learnings from other jurisdictions and represents the entire pharmacy ecosystem.

**Background:** The Ontario Pharmacy Platform

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