

April 23, 2019

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
College Park 5th Flr
777 Bay St
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Deputy Premier,

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) and the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (Neighbourhood Pharmacies) are pleased with your government's commitment in the Ontario 2019 Budget to expand pharmacists' scope of practice, ensuring that Ontarians have choice and more timely access to health services in the community in areas such as treatment for common ailments, vaccines and point of care testing. Both associations applaud and strongly support this long-awaited recognition of the value pharmacists deliver to the health system and the welfare of all Ontarians.

The associations and their respective members remain committed to pursuing a strong, collaborative partnership with your government and respectfully request the immediate establishment of a formal consultation process to assess the impact of the specific saving measures in addition to ongoing policy discussions. The formal consultations require access to the necessary data to achieve successful implementation that will reduce the impact on our collective members and their patients while simultaneously delivering on the fiscal savings needed. We are committed to partnering to identify opportunities that will optimize the overall health and drug budgets. We are seeking broad-based consultation on all policy changes impacting our members prior to implementation, and sufficient transition timeframes to adapt and to ensure continuity of care for patients.

The formal consultation process should simultaneously include discussions to move expanded scope of practice forward along the same timelines that the savings measures will be implemented. This makes good sense from a patient care perspective and will allow pharmacy businesses time to plan and adapt. With this approach, we believe that we can achieve the savings targets without unnecessarily and negatively impacting pharmacies in remote, rural, suburban and urban centres, all while increasing patient access to needed frontline services.

Pharmacy is a vital partner to achieving greater efficiencies in health delivery and increased capacity in every community across the province. During the last five years, pharmacy has contributed more than \$700 million in savings to government with lower drug prices and the implementation of specific policy changes in 2015. Pharmacy produces an estimated \$6.3 billion in economic output and more than 60,000 jobs in Ontario.

Notwithstanding the various positive elements for the profession in the budget, there were indications that government is expecting to achieve an additional \$140 million from pharmacy in annualized savings by 2021-22. This would take the contribution by pharmacy to an excess of \$300 million annually by 2021-22.

There are more than 4,400 small, medium and large-sized pharmacy businesses in Ontario that will be affected by the proposed savings measures. OPA and Neighbourhood Pharmacies are disappointed that there has been no formal consultation to assess the potential regulatory impacts or to seek alternative approaches to those outlined in the budget that align with the government's policy objectives.

The budgetary approach poses undue risk to pharmacies and introduces fiscal uncertainty at a time when they are being asked to embrace a new scope of practice.

Stability and predictability are necessary to enable pharmacists and pharmacy owners to continually provide high-quality patient care to contribute to much needed capacity in a straining healthcare system. Your government has signaled the need for profound system transformation, and we want to be part of that change.

We fully understand the need to address the sustainability of the health system in Ontario, and to shift funding to priority areas for patients. We have and will continue to stand ready to support this evolution. The healthcare system needs pharmacists in communities across Ontario and in all practice settings, including hospitals and multidisciplinary practice models, to deliver needed services close to home and work.

Our ask reinforces the Pharmacy Table proposal in December 2018 and we underscore the urgency of moving forward with a formalized and robust consultation process.

Sincerely,



Allan H. Malek
EVP and Chief Pharmacy Officer
Ontario Pharmacists Association



Justin Bates
Chief Executive Officer
Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada

cc: Helen Angus, Deputy Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Suzanne McGurn, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Patrick Dicerni, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Heather Watt, Chief of Staff to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Robin Martin, Parliamentary Assistant, MPP – Eglinton/Lawrence
Effie Triantafilopoulos, Parliamentary Assistant, MPP – Oakville North/Burlington
Mike Cavanagh, Chair, Board of Directors, Ontario Pharmacists Association
Jeff Leger, President, Shoppers Drug Mart and Chair, Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada
Jen Baker, Vice-Chair, Board of Directors, Ontario Pharmacists Association
Bill Wilson, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Pharmacists Association