

# **EXPANDING ACCESS & ADVANCING CARE**

Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada

2019 Federal Election Platform

Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (Neighbourhood Pharmacies) represents Canada's leading pharmacy organizations who deliver high value, quality care to Canadians in all models including chain, banner, long-term care, specialty and independent pharmacies as well as grocery chains and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. Our members are home to the most trusted providers of drug therapies, pharmacy-based patient services and innovative health care solutions.

We advocate for community-based care through our members' high accessibility and proven track record of providing optimal care closer to where patients live, work and play. By leveraging over 10,500 points of care with pharmacies conveniently located in every community across Canada, Neighbourhood Pharmacies aims to advance sustainable health care for all.

This election is a critical juncture for the future of health care in Canada. There are many decision points looming on the horizon – ranging from pharmacare to health care system transformation, and from the opioid crisis to drug pricing and access to affordable medicines.

Additionally, the economy and how we can improve the lives of middle class Canadians is an important issue that will be discussed daily on the campaign trail. Community pharmacies hold significant value for middle class and struggling Canadians. A recent series of reports by the Conference Board of Canada concluded that the community pharmacy sector directly generated more than \$8.2 billion in economic activity and supported nearly 163,400 jobs in 2016. The direct economic output of Canada's community pharmacy sector is comparable to that of the motor vehicle manufacturing sector.

Your neighbourhood pharmacy is an important economic engine supporting thousands of middle-class jobs and helping create efficiencies in Canada's broader health system. By providing valuable health services in convenient retail locations, the community pharmacy sector contributes to improvements in both individual and public health.

# COMMUNITY PHARMACY SECTOR IN CANADA: ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

Canada's community pharmacy sector is unique, providing health care to residents in a retail setting. It contributes to Canada's economy in several ways: it improves health, creates efficiencies in the broader health care system, and it creates jobs.



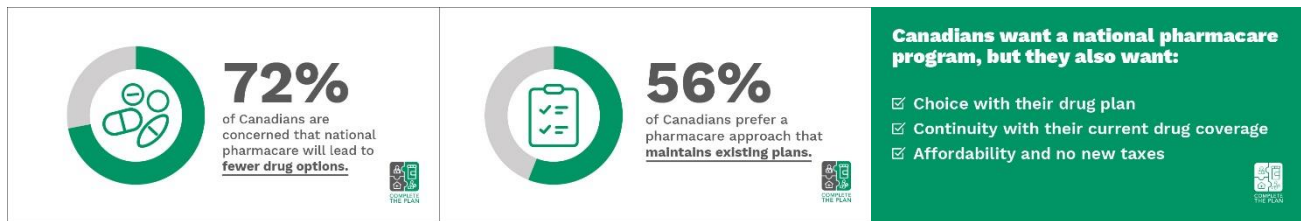
**Our 2019 federal election platform is centered on 2 core issues that will have immediate impact to better the everyday lives of patients:**

- 1) Ensuring Canadians can access the medicines they need**
- 2) Advancing concerted multi-pronged solutions to the opioid crisis**

## **Core issue 1: Ensuring Canadians can access the medicines they need**

### **Pharmacare – Complete the Plan**

Neighbourhood Pharmacies believes all Canadians deserve access to medications without financial barriers. Today 95% of the Canadian population, representing 34 million Canadians, have drug coverage. The remaining 5%, about 1.9 million, do not have access to prescription drug coverage. We know from existing research that Canadians are proud of their health care system and that, when it comes to pharmacare, they would prefer a made-in-Canada approach that maintains current levels of coverage and avoids unsustainable cost increases.



[Complete the Plan](#) is Neighbourhood Pharmacies' approach to bring all uninsured Canadians under an affordable public drug plan. We have developed a pharmacare plan that helps people who need it most, keeps costs down and doesn't disrupt existing plans. We estimate an investment between \$1 billion - \$3 billion would be required from the federal government to achieve coverage for all through a mixed payer model. The alternative single payer model would cost the government an estimated \$10 billion - \$14 billion.

Neighbourhood Pharmacies is calling on all federal political parties to support a responsible, pan-Canadian approach to [Complete the Plan](#) on pharmacare that:

- ensures all Canadians have access to and are enrolled in a prescription drug program whether public or private (public/private such as in Quebec)
- establishes a *minimum national formulary* to improve equity, portability of benefits and drive greater consistency in all provinces and territories
- enables flexibility for provinces and territories to adapt plans to allow for regionalized considerations and needs, including establishing a larger formulary or allowing income-based pricing or premiums to cover program costs
- supports Canadians who are underinsured by harmonizing catastrophic drug programs across Canada
- promotes optimal use of medications

## ***Protecting Canadians from Shortages Amid US Pressures on Accessibility of Affordable Drugs***

Ensuring accessibility to affordable medicines and protecting Canadians from drug shortages should be the first priority of government in establishing a national pharmacare plan. Over the past several years, drug shortages have become an increasingly serious concern in the Canadian health care system. In fact, approximately 1000 shortages are reported to Health Canada every year.<sup>1</sup>

In the face of growing legislation and rhetoric from President Trump and U.S. legislators that would permit importation of Health Canada-approved medicines for U.S. patients, Neighbourhood Pharmacies calls on Canadian political parties to commit to not allowing U.S. legislation to disrupt our pharmaceutical supply and negatively impact patient care through drug shortages.

Canada's pharmaceutical supply system is designed and carefully managed to serve our population of approximately 36 million. Our medicine supply is not sufficient to support both Canadian and U.S. consumers. Canada is allocated certain quantities of pharmaceuticals, based on estimated national requirements, by manufacturers with global supply chains. The Canadian pharmaceutical industry, health system, and governments do not have capacity to address the increased demand that could come from a direct supply relationship between Canadian pharmacy and U.S. states.

Neighbourhood Pharmacies is aligned with and supports recommendations made by the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) calling on Canada's federal political parties to outline an action plan addressing drug shortages that would include:

- research into the causes and solutions for drug supply issues
- leadership on an international taskforce to enact tangible solutions to this problem
- support for frontline health care providers struggling to manage supply disruptions

Neighbourhood Pharmacies also encourages federal political parties to consider the impact of drug policies, including pharmacare and drug pricing, on patient access to medications.

## **Core issue 2: Advancing concerted multi-pronged solutions to the opioid crisis**

Communities across Canada are faced with an increasing opioid crisis yet have limited treatment options and tools to combat the problem. In 2018, there were 4,460 apparent opioid-related deaths – that's one life every two hours lost to opioids.<sup>2</sup> Prevention and harm-reduction strategies will require comprehensive, coordinated action. We need to address the key factors creating the conditions for this crisis while delivering harm-reduction programs that tackle opioid dependency through more effective pain-management services.

### ***Pain Management***

Neighbourhood Pharmacies calls on all federal political parties to commit to a substantive, pharmacy-delivered pain management program for opioid users. This program should be designed to address the prescription-related elements of the crisis. The program should also enhance the provinces' prevention strategies by providing patients with one-on-one support to appropriately manage their pain and mitigate the potential for opioid dependence.

---

<sup>1</sup> Donelle, Duffin, Pipitone and White-Guay (2018). Assessing Canada's Drug Shortage Problem. p.23.  
[https://www.cdhowe.org/sites/default/files/attachments/research\\_papers/mixed/Commentary\\_515.pdf](https://www.cdhowe.org/sites/default/files/attachments/research_papers/mixed/Commentary_515.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/datalab/national-surveillance-opioid-mortality.html#AORD>

### ***Modernizing Regulations Pertaining to Pharmacists: Prescribing & Deprescribing Under CDSA***

To enact meaningful measures that treat prescription-related addiction, Neighbourhood Pharmacies calls on all federal political parties to commit to enabling pharmacists with the authority to deprescribe controlled drugs and substances by including pharmacists as practitioners under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA).

As your partners in delivering frontline health care in communities, Neighbourhood Pharmacies is keenly aware that patients across Canada are facing limited options to combat addiction. Allowing pharmacists to manage opioid doses and deprescribe opioids for patients who are being over-prescribed gives the federal government a powerful tool to increase the efficacy of addiction-prevention strategies.

### ***Naloxone Accessibility***

Understanding and addressing the key factors that created the conditions for the opioid crisis is critical when determining effective long-term solutions. However, we also recognize time is of the essence. We must begin taking more concrete actions to address this crisis right now.

Neighbourhood Pharmacies is calling on all federal political parties to support dedicated funding as part of the next phase of action in the opioid crisis. Dedicated funding will help pharmacies increase the availability of naloxone in communities across Canada. This should be done in a way that replaces provincial naloxone administration protocols with one national protocol, to provide consistency and eliminate patient confusion. Doing so will deliver a real, tangible change in the lives of Canadians struggling with substance abuse and help support safer communities.

### ***Authorizing Pharmacies to Dispense and Distribute Medical Cannabis & Cannabis Health Products***

When used appropriately, cannabis can be an effective secondary or tertiary treatment for several conditions and reduce the number and dose of opioid prescriptions. Allowing pharmacies and pharmacists to distribute cannabis for medical purposes and provide the necessary education for safe, appropriate use of these products represents an important step towards reducing reliance on opioids by Canadian patients.

Authorizing pharmacists and pharmacies to distribute cannabis for medical purposes is consistent with the authorization of hospitals and physicians to do so. Pharmacies provide a safe, secure distribution option for patients. With over 10,500 locations in virtually every Canadian neighbourhood, pharmacies can ensure equitable access for all medical patients. Pharmacists' expertise in medication management allows them to effectively advise and educate patients on the use of cannabis for medical purposes and ensures patients adhere to a proper dosage.

## **Conclusion: Healthy Pharmacies, Healthy Patients**

Healthy pharmacies ultimately deliver a less costly, more efficient health care system.

Canadian pharmacies need modern policies that will allow them to meet the evolving health care expectations of Canadian patients.

Neighbourhood Pharmacies supports a modern pharmacy model that allows more Canadians to access high-quality care that is efficient, cost-effective and conveniently located.

We know that patients value community-based health care. The access to medications, treatments and services provided by pharmacies help patients navigate and manage their health concerns with greater ease and predictability.

Recognizing and advancing the vital role of pharmacies in delivering health care is an important step government can confidently take towards creating the capacity needed to better serve and support Canadians.

Neighbourhood Pharmacies calls on all federal political parties to devote considerable attention to the issues identified in this platform – demonstrating your willingness and commitment to ensure Canadians can access the health care they need.