



**Neighbourhood
Pharmacy**
Association of Canada

Association canadienne
**des pharmacies
de quartier**

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The Honourable Christine Elliott
Minister of Health & Deputy Premier of Ontario
Ministry of Health
5th Floor – 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

April 6, 2020

Dear Minister Elliott,

As COVID-19 spreads and more cases are identified in Ontario, the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (Neighbourhood Pharmacies) offers our support. Every day, pharmacies are stepping up in critical ways, delivering the products and services their communities need. As cases increase, so do calls and visits to pharmacies.

Our Association represents the full range of Canadian pharmacies 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. We also advocate for pharmacies' role in caring for Canadians – behind the counter and in front of it. We aim to advance healthcare for Ontarians by leveraging over 4,500 pharmacies conveniently located in neighbourhoods across the province as integral points of patient care.

Neighbourhood Pharmacies is aligned with the Ontario Pharmacists Association in wanting to assist Ontarians; not only in receiving information on COVID-19, but also by facilitating testing and care. As pharmacists continue to help manage the supply of medicines, we require government's support to manage the unintended consequences and, on a short-term basis, to cover the Ontario Drug Benefit co-payment on the second and third dispenses for patients and pharmacies with the new 30-day medication limit in place – a policy we assert was and continues to be critical to preserve the pharmaceutical supply chain and ensure that all Ontarians have access to the medicines they need.

We are very supportive of Ontario releasing their COVID-19 modelling data. It underscores the need for all of us to do our part to help fight this crisis. However, it also reveals that our healthcare system's ability to handle the incoming volume of patients will be severely challenged. Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to create capacity and mitigate some of the stress placed on the healthcare system. Pharmacists are trusted by Ontarians. For many patients, pharmacists represent an important frontline healthcare worker, first point of contact, and primary care provider in a patient's circle of care. Enabling pharmacists to assist patients with enhanced scope of practice can help keep patients out of hospital and alleviate the pressures on other healthcare resources including family physicians and Telehealth Ontario.

We are encouraged by your government's announcement to expand pharmacists' scope to enable pharmacists to administer medications by injection and inhalation, as well as to prescribe for minor ailments, and believe that expediting patients' access to these services through pharmacies will have a great impact on alleviating pressures on the healthcare system. The regulations to expand scope to enable pharmacists to administer routine injections were

tabled in fall 2019 but never enacted, and draft regulations for minor ailments are currently open for consultation through the Ontario College of Pharmacists and due to government June 30, 2020.

As an essential service, we request that pharmacists be supported to receive access to personal protective equipment (PPE), adequate stock of supplies of sanitizers and other disinfectant products needed to facilitate safe pharmacy operation.

To support to our fullest extent, pharmacies would do well to have a clear line of sight and participatory role supporting the Ministry of Health's efforts towards easing the burden on physicians, clinics, hospitals and other healthcare providers during this crisis. We committedly offer that Neighbourhood Pharmacies' members are ready and willing to provide assistance as emergency plans are developed and operationalized in the province.

As CEO of Neighbourhood Pharmacies, I welcome a discussion with you on the role of pharmacy throughout COVID-19, as a vital aspect of healthcare delivery and creating capacity in communities throughout Ontario.

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 Ontario's COVID-19 response.

In the meanwhile, sincerely hoping you remain healthy throughout the coming months.

Regards,



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