



**Neighbourhood
Pharmacy**
Association of Canada

Association canadienne
**des pharmacies
de quartier**

365 Bloor Street East, Suite 2003
Toronto, ON M4W 3L4
T : 416.226.9100
F : 416.226.9185
info@neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca
neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca

The Honourable Adrian Dix,
Minister of Health,
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4

May 15, 2020

Dear Minister Dix,

The Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada ('Neighbourhood Pharmacies') and our members have been following B.C.'s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We offer our sincere appreciation for the work you and Dr. Henry have done throughout this time. I speak on behalf of the Association and our B.C. members when I say we feel very confident in your government's response. We also appreciate the guidance and information provided by yourself and Ministry of Health officials. It is clear that the actions and decisions you and your team have taken continue to make your province a leader when it comes to flattening the curve. As you may know, Neighbourhood Pharmacies is the respected voice and advocate for the business of pharmacy in British Columbia. We represent Canada's leading pharmacy brands including chain, banner, long-term care and specialty pharmacies, as well as grocery chains and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. Our many B.C. members have been working on the frontlines of this crisis from the outset, supporting British Columbians and serving their communities with tireless dedication. From our experience over the last two months, we have identified additional areas where pharmacies can offer support to your government in the 'new normal' – especially when considering how best to deliver healthcare.

During the course of our discussions with Ministry staff, we have brought forward the idea of having pharmacies play a larger role in the provision and distribution of vaccines to support public health. Pharmacies administer the majority of vaccinations in B.C., and we remain among the most convenient, accessible healthcare providers. With close to 1,400 pharmacies in B.C., we are located in virtually every community across the province.

Within our existing infrastructure is the potential for pharmacies to provide further support; namely, by utilizing the pharmaceutical supply chain to optimize vaccine provision and distribution. Including the well-established and secure pharmaceutical supply chain as part of provision and distribution creates capacity within the public health system, allowing the attention of public health to be directed towards the most urgent aspects of the crisis.

As you know, this year there will be an even greater level of importance placed on vaccines for our most vulnerable citizens, as the potential of a second wave of COVID-19 in the fall is a possibility. Enlisting the support of pharmacy in vaccine provision and distribution may help

mitigate the spread of COVID-19 during flu season and allow public health units to continue doing what they have done so well: prioritizing patients and ensuring vulnerable populations receive care. Involving the pharmaceutical supply chain in vaccine provision and distribution would also expedite and improve efficiency of the overall process, with a view to minimizing influenza-related hospitalizations of British Columbians at a time when hospitals and acute care centres may be at capacity.

We believe there is real opportunity for pharmacy to deliver critical services as we transition to the recovery phase of the pandemic, including broader immunization services and point of care testing, to fortify B.C.'s overall strategy for improved healthcare delivery. We are available and willing to provide the supports the health system will require as we look at new ways to respond to health crises like COVID-19.

We also believe there is an opportunity to look at renewed ways to leverage the infrastructure of community pharmacies and support your government's vision of a strong, resilient primary care system. We feel integrating pharmacies into digital health platforms will enable pharmacists to more fully support the primary care system. This will allow pharmacists to enhance the delivery of transitions in care, and improve community support in all corners of the province. We have seen tremendous success with your vision for primary and acute care centres. We believe community pharmacies can play an important role assisting patients closer to home by ensuring continuity of care; facilitating integration of information; and allowing government and public health to tackle critical population health crises.

As we confront the steady stream of challenges posed by this pandemic, we are proud of our members. They have risen to meet the challenges and have stepped up to be an additional level of support and frontline care in B.C. We want to highlight that our sector and organization stand ready to support your government as you navigate the future of healthcare and how it will be delivered. Thank you again for the work you are doing on a daily basis, ensuring the health and wellness of B.C.'s residents. It is truly remarkable. We welcome the opportunity to continue having constructive dialogue with you and your team.

Keep well and all the best,



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

cc: Mitch Moneo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Pharmaceutical Services Division