



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

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PRESENTATION BY THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PHARMACY ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

S. Hanna: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

My name is Sandra Hanna, and I'm the CEO of the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada. We represent Canada's leading pharmacy organizations, including chain, banner, long-term care and specialty pharmacies, as well as grocery chains and mass merchandisers with pharmacies.

I believe all of you have our submission, which has some additional context about our organization and the role that pharmacy has played throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Let me just start by saying that our members were very proud to support British Columbians and served their communities with tireless dedication. I am personally proud of the way our members quickly adapted their operations to continue to serve the public in a safe and effective manner.

Building on our role to date in B.C., we believe there is an opportunity for pharmacy to deliver critical services as we transition through the reopening stages after this pandemic.

We have three recommendations for the B.C. government during this planning cycle.

Our first recommendation is really to expand the role that pharmacists play in administering the seasonal flu vaccine. Pharmacies are already administering most influenza vaccines in B.C. and remain among the most convenient and accessible health care providers, given our presence in virtually every community across the province with about 1,400 pharmacies across British Columbia.

Pharmacies are also the most cost-effective providers of the influenza vaccine. Public health officials have already noted that the success of the 2020 flu vaccine campaign will be critical to the health system's ability to manage this pandemic. Based on some analysis we performed on the 2017-2018 flu season, where pharmacies were delivering upwards of 50 percent of vaccines and this number has increased year over year, we've estimated that upwards of \$6 million can be saved if pharmacies were to deliver all flu vaccines.

By better utilizing our most cost-effective and most accessible health care providers in this flu campaign, we can reinvest some of those savings to further support the success of this campaign. This year in particular, there will be added costs and expenses to pharmacies to continue to deliver vaccines safely and

effectively, PPE and other materials, as well as continued measures to enforce and encourage social distancing. So an increase in fees paid by governments to pharmacists to administer these vaccines will be critical to expanding this capacity. By expanding the role of pharmacists in the seasonal flu campaign, this will allow public health units and physicians to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to care when and where they need it most.

Our second recommendation is to leverage the existing pharmaceutical supply chain to modernize the distribution of influenza vaccines in British Columbia. This is being done in some of the other provinces and has been shown to be quite successful. The existing distribution system for flu vaccines in British Columbia is led by BCCDC and relies on public health units distributing vaccine to pharmacists in their region. We have seen in recent years how this system has led to some gaps and shortages and how it may create cold chain capacity and workload challenges for both BCCDC as well as health authority officials.

The COVID-19 pandemic has really shown the importance of a robust and responsive distribution network. The existing pharmacy supply chain manages access to medicines on a daily basis, with systems in place to predict and react to changes in demand patterns as well as predictable shortages. We believe that this system that we're proposing will deliver cost savings and reduce wastage, which will allow for more efficient distribution of labour throughout public health units.

Based on the experience of our colleagues in the southern hemisphere, we can expect that the demand for vaccines for the influenza season will be higher than anticipated this year. Allowing pharmacy to manage the distribution of the seasonal vaccine will create capacity in public health systems and help to manage potential vaccine shortages while leveraging an existing distribution network, creating further savings that can be reinvested in health care.

Our third and final recommendation involves COVID-19 serology testing. Pharmacies can play an important role as serology testing sites as B.C. moves forward with its plan to widely make tests for COVID antibodies accessible, adding capacity once again, and reach, to provincial testing efforts. B.C.'s pharmacies already are able to administer point-of-care tests, and as trained health care providers, pharmacists are critical to interpreting test results and allowing for timely and accessible assessments.

We also have existing networks in place to communicate information to public health through our drug claims system and through PharmaNet, which can also, then, enable communication with the Canadian Institute for Health Information on the federal level.

In conclusion, to ensure that our health system can operate efficiently throughout the pandemic and into the recovery, we must make sure that all health care providers can contribute to the full extent of their training, knowledge and expertise.

Community pharmacies can play an important role by assisting patients closer to home, ensuring continuity of care, facilitating integration of information and allowing government and public health to focus on priorities such as addressing the needs of our most vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your time.

B. D'Eith (Chair): Thank you very much.

Before I open it up to the other members, just in regards to Neighbourhood Pharmacy. I had a couple of comments and questions in regards to vaccines and the flu vaccine. I'm just wondering if your thoughts there in expanding pharmacies providing vaccines would actually help in terms of when and if a COVID-

19 vaccine is developed and whether or not that could be potentially a good reason to also expand the services. Could you comment on that?

S. Hanna: Certainly. We believe very, very strongly that pharmacies have developed a really important role in the provision of vaccines in general. British Columbians, just like Canadians across the country, have voted with their feet, so to speak.

They are appreciative of the convenience and the accessibility of pharmacies as an avenue to receive vaccinations, and we certainly believe pharmacies are already trained and already equipped with the infrastructure to be able to very effectively deliver, in a very accessible and convenient manner, the COVID vaccine once it becomes available.

B. D'Eith (Chair): Thanks. The second question I had is just for people who are listening or for the record. Could you explain what a serology test is? Also, my understanding on serology tests at this point, is that there isn't one that is very effective. Fair enough, if there is an effective serology test, pharmacies should maybe be involved in a big way with that. But I'm just wondering if you could comment on the state of serology testing, what it is and how pharmacies can help with that.

S. Hanna: Certainly. Serology testing is antibody testing. It's critical in the later stages of understanding immunity and herd immunity in the development of future research for vaccines. It's an important step in terms of data-gathering.

Pharmacies are already equipped with PharmaNet, which is a centralized system, as you know, where a lot of those tests and test results can be recorded and easily transmitted to the Ministry of Health in British Columbia.

B. D'Eith (Chair): Thank you, Sandra.