

August 6, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Morneau and Minister Hajdu,

Now more than ever, Canada desperately needs a universal, single-payer, public pharmacare program. As organizations that have strongly advocated for this program, we are appealing to you, as our elected leaders, to get to work on delivering pharmacare to Canadians.

During the 2019 federal election, we were pleased to see the Liberal Party of Canada commit to implementing a national pharmacare program guided by the recommendations of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare. However, we have yet to see your government take concrete action on this issue.

There has never been a more urgent moment to guarantee universal access to prescription medications. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 5 Canadians had either no drug coverage at all or had inadequate coverage. That number has increased significantly during the pandemic, with millions of people losing their jobs and their employer-sponsored drug plans.

As we prepare for a second wave of COVID-19, it is of utmost importance to keep people healthy and out of the hospital. Universal, public pharmacare would help us achieve this by ensuring that everyone in Canada can access the medications they need.

This essential new program would help the millions of Canadian families and businesses that are struggling economically due to this crisis. Universal, public pharmacare would allow families to save on average \$350 per year, and businesses to save on average \$750 per year per employee. This program would also lead to system-wide savings of \$5 billion a year.

By consolidating our bargaining power through a national pharmacare program, we could significantly reduce the costs of medications, including new COVID-19 treatments and vaccines that come on the market.

There is widespread support for universal, public pharmacare across the country. In May, a diverse coalition of 200 organizations signed a [joint statement](#) calling on your government to immediately begin implementing this program.

And yet, universal, public pharmacare was absent from your government's recent fiscal and economic update. For decades, we have been told that pharmacare would be too costly, and that governments simply cannot afford it. It is evident from government spending in the past few months that if there is a will, there is always a way. If governments across the country can provide [\\$16 billion in aid to the fossil fuels sector](#), surely we can afford to implement this program that would benefit all Canadians.

As the pre-budget consultations are underway, you have a unique opportunity to shape Canada for the better by implementing universal, public pharmacare. This program should be an integral part of your government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We look forward to seeing immediate action towards implementing universal, public pharmacare in the coming weeks. As always, we are eager to support you in realizing this vision.

Sincerely,

Pauline Worsfold
Chair, Canadian Health Coalition

Linda Silas
President, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

Bill Chedore
President, Congress of Union Retirees of Canada

Rick Smith
Executive Director, Broadbent Institute

Danyaal Raza
Chair, Canadian Doctors for Medicare

Ken Neumann
National Director for Canada, United Steelworkers

Jerry Dias
President, Unifor

Larry Brown
President, National Union of Public and General Employees

Mark Hancock
National President, Canadian Union of Public Employees

Diego Marchese
Executive Vice President, Mission, Research, Social Enterprise, Heart & Stroke

Anita Huberman
CEO, Surrey Board of Trade

Christina Warner
Council of Canadians

Chris Aylward
National President, Public Service Alliance of Canada