

BULLETIN

HSA welcomes report calling for universal Pharmacare program

June 17, 2019

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The federal Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare [has released its final report](#), and recommends that Canada adopt a universal Pharmacare program that is comprehensive, accessible, portable, and public. The report marks a major step forward in the movement to establish a universal Pharmacare program.

“This is our generation’s national project,” reads the report. “Let’s complete the unfinished business of universal health care. That can be our promise, and our legacy, to each other and to all future generations.”

HSA members actively engaged in the council’s public consultation process, which began last summer, and sent a clear message that Canada needs a universal Pharmacare program that is accessible to all. The council heard from thousands of Canadians across country, and has outlined a pathway forward for establishing a national Pharmacare program.

“HSA extends its thanks to all members who participated in the public consultation process in sending a message that affirmed that everyone, regardless of ability to pay, deserves access to prescription medicines,” said HSA President Val Avery.

“We know that increased access to prescriptions would improve public health outcomes and result in public health system efficiencies,” she said.

The council concludes that improved health outcomes related to a universal Pharmacare program would result in 220,000 fewer emergency department visits and 90,000 fewer hospitalizations annually. It projects up to \$1.2 billion in yearly savings for the health system.

By adopting a bulk purchasing (single-payer) model and other cost-saving measures, a universal Pharmacare program would help to curb spiraling drug costs and lower total spending on prescription drugs by \$5 billion by the year 2027, the report says. The council recommends the establishment of a national drug agency to negotiate drug prices.

While public health advocates have criticized the council’s recommendation to establish co-payments (to a maximum of \$2 for essential medicines, \$5 per prescription, and an annual maximum of \$100 per household per year), the report as a whole sets a clear directive from Canadians to establish a comprehensive and universal public program.

Our work is not over

“The current patchwork system of coverage benefits for-profit insurance companies and the pharmaceutical industry. We can expect that groups within these sectors will lobby against the council’s recommendations for a universal single-payer program,” Avery said.

"I encourage HSA members to join with union members across the country working with the Canadian Labour Congress to call on our federal politicians to commit to implementing the council's recommendations. Let's make universal Pharmacare an election issue this fall. You can email your local Member of Parliament and let them know that on Oct. 21, you will be voting for universal Pharmacare," she said.

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To read the final report, *A Prescription for Canada: Pharmacare for All*, [click here](#).

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