



Oct. 4, 2023

The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2
Via email

Dear Prime Minister,

As we anticipate your government's pharmacare legislation this fall, we encourage you to stay true to your promise to Canadians and, most importantly, the principle that has served as the foundation of our health care system for decades – universal coverage.

As Dr. Eric Hoskins, the chair of your Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Medicare, pointed out so succinctly in the council's 2019 final report, the absence of universal drug coverage in Canada is a gaping and growing gap between our values, as Canadians, and our reality. When we embraced medicare, we committed to looking after each other when sick. That's a commitment we've been unable to live up to, in the absence of universal drug coverage. Without the bargaining power that comes from a national, single-payer plan, Canadians have been left to pay amongst the highest prescription drug costs in the world. Under our current, fragmented system, one in five Canadians have no drug coverage. This means that millions are unable to afford prescription drugs – or must choose between the drugs prescribed and other necessities of wellbeing such as food, heat and shelter.

Time and time again, Canada has returned to the conversation of universal drug coverage, arriving at the same conclusions – it is both the right thing to do and of great benefit to all. In their 2018 report, the Liberal-led Standing Health Committee, after an exhaustive two-year study, called for a national pharmacare plan that's universal, portable and comprehensive. The advisory council led by Hoskins, struck in the wake of that report, brought us to essentially the same conclusion – the need for a national, universal, single-payer, comprehensive pharmacare plan.

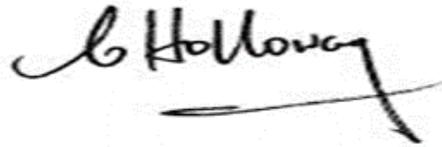
The benefits are, by now, incontrovertible. Hoskins' report pointed to annual savings of \$5 billion on system-wide spending on prescription drugs, \$6.4 billion on families' out of pocket drug costs and \$16.6 billion on business and employee drug costs. The advisory council also pointed to another \$1.2 billion in savings to the health system that would flow from universal pharmacare from 220,000 fewer visits to emergency rooms and 90,000 fewer hospitalizations. Such relief on health budgets and health human resources, in particular, would have been welcome then – and it's vital today.

We are back now at a decision point on this issue with the opportunity before you to, as you've promised, "deliver for Canadians." Nurses understand that the interests and influence of a global pharmaceutical industry and deeply-entrenched insurance companies stand in the way of the promise Canadians made to each other when we embraced universal health care decades ago. But, Prime Minister, Canadians' health must come before corporate profits – pharmaceutical and insurance companies should not be permitted to dictate Canadian policy. It is time for you, Prime Minister, to deliver universal drug coverage for all Canadians.

Yours warmly,



Doris Grinspun, RN, BSc.N., MSN, PhD,
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