



We need universal Pharmacare now more than ever

August 20, 2018

From June 20 to Sept. 28, a federal advisory council hosted public consultations to inform recommendations on the establishment of a national Pharmacare plan. As momentum builds for a national program, HSA members face an historic opportunity to advocate for a plan rooted in principles of fairness, accessibility, and universality. As the advisory council prepares its recommendations, our members of parliament must continue to hear from Canadians regarding the importance of a universal Pharmacare program.

HSA members care about universal access to prescription drugs. As an HSA pharmacist said recently during a roundtable discussion on Pharmacare, the biggest concern is that once patients are discharged from hospital with a course of treatment, there's no guarantee they have the ability to carry out the treatment if they don't have the means to pay for necessary medication.

Essential medicines are becoming increasingly expensive for Canadians. The newly negotiated United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) [expands patent rights for pharmaceutical companies that sell biologic drugs](#). Biologic medicines account for a significant portion of patented drugs sold in Canada. They include medications for serious illnesses like cancer, Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and psoriasis.

Under USMCA, patent rights for biologic drugs will be expanded from eight years to ten, restricting the supply of more affordable, generic drugs in Canada. It is estimated that this change will cost Canadian residents tens of millions of dollars annually. But a universal, single-payer Pharmacare program would create massive savings for Canadians. [A report released by the Parliamentary Budget Officer](#) estimates a Pharmacare program would save the federal government 4.2 billion per year.

Members are encouraged to email their MPs about the importance of creating a universal Pharmacare program, accessible to all. Use the [online tool created by the Canadian Labour Congress \(CLC\)](#), or contact your [MP](#) directly. Please also consider signing the CLC's online petition, found [here](#).

For more information on why Canada should create a universal Pharmacare plan, please visit www.aplanforeveryone.ca.

Other resources

- View [HSA's submission to the Federal Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare](#).
- View HSA's [members' guide](#) to the advisory council's public survey.
- Read [Pharmacare 2020](#), a collaborative report delivered by Canada's leading health economists.
- Read about the [pros and cons of USMCA](#) in an analysis produced by the Council of Canadians.
- Read [HSA's coverage of the March 2019 interim report of the federal advisory council](#), published in the [March 2019 issue of HSA's member magazine *The Report*](#).
- Read the Federal Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare final report, [A Prescription for Canada: Pharmacare for All](#).
- Read [HSA's release on the federal advisory council's final report](#), released in June 2019.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017