



Greetings,

The Federal Election on Monday September 20 is not that far off and Care Watch is advocating for policies that will benefit seniors. This is the first of several mailings we plan to send out in advance of the election. We encourage you to use this information in deciding how to vote and to share widely.

Care Watch Board of Directors



Election Action 2021: National Pharmacare

Canada is the only country in the world that has universal medical care but doesn't have universal coverage for prescription drugs. That's just wrong.

What we have now is a mishmash. Sometimes government pays, sometimes a workplace plan pays, sometimes private insurance pays, and sometimes individuals pay. About 20% of Canadians have coverage that doesn't meet their needs, and some have no coverage at all. Now that more people are self-employed or doing part-time, temporary, or contract work, that number is growing.

It's no surprise when people skip doses or don't even fill their prescriptions. In June 2019, an advisory council report told us that:

- 1 in 5 households had a member who wasn't taking medicine because of the cost.
- Nearly 3 million Canadians said they couldn't afford their prescription medicines.
- To pay for medicines, almost 1 million people had to cut back on food or heating and almost 1 million had to borrow money.

When people get sicker because they don't take the medicines they need, they risk suffering, harm, or even death. Extra visits to doctors and hospitals cost the health care system billions of dollars.

Drugs are the second largest expense in the health care system – just after hospitals - and we're paying more than we need to. Countries with universal pharmacare pay less for the same drugs. When individual plans negotiate with individual companies, we weaken our bargaining power. When we replace many buyers with a single large powerful one, we can get the best prices. National pharmacare would also establish a consistent list of safe and effective medications; provide guidance on using and monitoring medications; and make it easier to get drugs for rare diseases.

What we need is universal, single-payer, public pharmacare that works the same way our medical coverage works. All Canadians will have the medications they need without worrying about the cost. It will cost money, but also save money – up to \$5 billion per year by the time it's fully in place. Just think about the services that money could pay for.

In 2019, the advisory council urged Canada to establish national pharmacare. It laid out a plan to get it going. Then the idea got stalled. It's time to get it back on track. Provinces and territories will carry out the plan, but the federal government needs to lead and set a structure.

What can you do about pharmacare?

An election is a chance to talk to candidates and ask them important questions. Here is a start.

- Should every Canadian be able to get the medicines they need without having to worry about the cost? What will you and your party do to make that happen?
- Do you support using Canada's economic strength to get prescription drugs at better prices?
- Do you support national pharmacare? What will your party do to make it happen? What will you do?

Ask, think, and then vote!

We welcome and appreciate donations to support our advocacy work. However, we are not a registered charity, so we can't issue tax receipts for donations. To donate, please go to: <https://carewatchontario.com/get-involved/donate>.

*** Not-for-Profit * Volunteer-Run * Senior-Led**

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