



**Neighbourhood  
Pharmacy**  
Association of Canada

Association canadienne  
**des pharmacies  
de quartier**

1205-3230 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON M4N 3P6  
T: 416.226.9100  
F: 416.226.9185  
info@neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca  
neighbourhoodpharmacies.ca

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PHARMACIES ONTARIO PROVINCIAL ELECTION PLATFORM

### **INVESTING IN ACCESS**

Neighbourhood Pharmacies advocates for pharmacies' role in caring for Canadians. We represent leading pharmacy organizations, including chain, banner, long-term care, grocery chains, specialty pharmacies, and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. In Ontario, we advance the delivery of care through close to 4,600 community pharmacies and their teams, serving as integral community health hubs in urban, suburban, rural, remote and First Nations neighbourhoods across the province. The total economic footprint of the Ontario pharmacy sector is estimated at over \$6.1 billion in GDP representing more than 94,000 jobs.

Ontario's pharmacies have offered accessible, critical support to patients and communities throughout the pandemic and continue to be a partner to public health, primary care providers and governments. This partnership has ensured the continuity of patient care, protected the medication supply, and provided vital COVID-19 vaccination and testing services. Pharmacies have always remained open throughout the course of the pandemic and will continue to do so.

Pharmacies typically have extended hours, offering primary care services with the accessibility and convenience that Ontarians value. Pharmacies are the first and often most frequent point of contact Ontarians have with the healthcare system and have the capacity to deliver medication therapies, vaccinations, disease management and screening support and other innovative healthcare solutions to patients where they live. Pharmacy teams cultivate valuable, trusted and long-standing relationships with their patients. More can be done to unlock the potential of pharmacy as a healthcare partner.

We call on all candidates and elected officials to work with the community pharmacy sector to expand Ontarian's access to integral pharmacy services while rebuilding the economy and health system. As appropriate remuneration is fundamental to providing pharmacy services, we further encourage the government to consider sustainable ways to fund these critical services.

#### **We urge candidates to:**

#### **1. Make routine immunizations more accessible**

Community pharmacies and their teams have the infrastructure and training to administer vaccines. Ontario pharmacies have administered more than 7.5 million COVID-19 vaccines to date and well over 1.6 million flu vaccines this season alone. Enabling and remunerating pharmacy to provide all other routine immunizations will provide Ontarians with improved access to their routinely recommended vaccines.

#### **Benefits to Ontarians**

- **Prevent new disease outbreaks.** There has been a concerning decrease in routine vaccinations for vaccine preventable diseases such as pneumonia, shingles and HPV during the pandemic. As many as one in four adults, and up to 35% of children, have missed a routine vaccination. Increasing pharmacy involvement to catch-up on missed vaccinations will help mitigate new disease outbreaks and keep Ontarians safe.
- **Provide equitable vaccine access.** Most publicly funded routine vaccines are available in primary care offices and public health clinics but are not distributed to community pharmacies. This can limit patient access to vaccines. Pharmacies are rooted in communities across the province making vaccine access more equitable to all.

- **Increase vaccine uptake.** More than 60% of Ontarians would immediately accept a routine immunization at their local pharmacy, citing convenience – including proximity to home, extended hours, ability to walk-in, and ability to ask questions – as the key driver. Evidence also shows that pharmacy-based immunization services can lead to increased vaccination uptake.
- **Increase healthcare capacity.** Many essential healthcare workers, especially nurses and doctors, are burned out and in short supply. Community pharmacies have the benefit of leveraging their entire pharmacy team, including pharmacy technicians, students and potentially other health care providers, to provide vaccinations, adding much needed capacity.

## 2. Enable pharmacists to assess and prescribe for minor ailments.

Minor ailments are self-limiting conditions that can often resolve on their own or with “over-the-counter” products but can benefit from prescription medication. Regulations allowing pharmacists to prescribe medication for minor ailments have recently been posted for consultation, and a remuneration framework has already been recommended. Swift implementation of these regulations and a funding framework for minor ailments assessment services for all Ontarians will improve access to primary care and create more convenient access to treatments for common ailments.

### Benefits to Ontarians:

- **Reduce pressure on primary care and ERs.** Millions of Ontarians were unable to see their primary care provider during the pandemic, and the system is challenged to catch up. Dealing with minor ailments can take up to 10-20 % of physicians’ time, who are already overburdened. Triageing minor ailments to pharmacies can redistribute the burden of care and minimize unnecessary ER visits by patients who can’t access primary care.
- **Provide timely access to convenient care.** Ontarians who need in-person care for the treatment of common ailment often wait days for an appointment with a primary care provider or hours in a walk-in clinic or an emergency department, which may require time off work. Pharmacies are open and accessible on evenings and weekends, and are ready to provide timely access to care, in patients’ local communities.
- **Uncomplicate the patient journey.** Ontarians with minor ailments can be assessed at a pharmacy in their community, at a time that is convenient for them, have treatment prescribed and receive their medication all in one place. This means faster service, fewer demands on the healthcare system and better access overall to care.
- **Support better health outcomes.** Pharmacists are the healthcare system’s experts on medication therapy and as such are fully competent to identify appropriate medication therapy for all minor ailments. Limiting pharmacy interventions to non-prescription recommendation’s may not be in the patients’ best interest and often necessitates multiple touchpoints with the healthcare system, which can be costly and inconvenient for the patient.

## SUMMARY

We have proposed two key recommendations to enable pharmacy to effectively and efficiently support the public health and primary care needs Ontarians.

Leveraging the pharmacy channel will add health human resources capacity, increase convenient patient care, reduce backlog and support improved health system resiliency through and after the COVID19 pandemic. Commensurate remuneration will further support the pharmacy sector in providing these beneficial services.

Investing in pharmacy, now, is an investment in sustainable healthcare delivery and patient access for years to come.

**We look forward to working together to build a stronger healthcare system, that meets the needs of Ontarians.**