



CANADIAN
FEDERATION
OF NURSES
UNIONS

WWW.NURSESUNIONS.CA
INFO@NURSESUNIONS.CA

2841 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1V 8X7
CANADA

T 613-526-4661
F 613-526-1023

1-800-321-9821

Canada Needs a National Pharmacare Program

Ottawa (August 20, 2014) - The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions calls on governments at all levels to support the development of a national pharmacare program, in a new report released today, *A Roadmap to a Rational Pharmacare Policy in Canada*. The report, by Dr. Marc-André Gagnon, an Assistant Professor at Carleton University's School of Public Policy and Administration, demonstrates that the present hybrid prescription drug system isn't working, is unfair, inequitable and wastes vast amounts of money. Canadian drug coverage is offered based on where a person works or lives, instead of accounting for their medical needs. We need to improve access for all Canadians.

Canadians pay among the highest per capita costs for prescription drugs, when compared to other OECD countries, but with one Canadian in 10 unable to fill their prescriptions, we are also among countries with the most acute problem accessing prescription drugs. Although there have been initiatives to contain rising costs, these have only shifted costs elsewhere within the system.

A Roadmap to a Rational Pharmacare Policy in Canada highlights four practical reforms which would improve our access to prescription drugs. Gagnon's series of pragmatic, achievable steps should be taken now to turn policy into practice.

Gagnon states that "...while a universal pharmacare program may not solve all the challenges we face, it will help build the institutional capacity to improve access, diminish costs, improve practices and ensure the continued sustainability of our health care system." Dr. Gagnon asserts that if Canada offered first-dollar coverage, a universal pharmacare program would generate savings of 10% to 41% on prescription drugs, representing savings of up to \$11.4 billion per year, while simultaneously improving health outcomes.

An EKOS survey showed that 78% of Canadians are in favour of establishing a universal pharmacare program in Canada. Linda Silas, President of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, said: "Our policymakers have all the necessary tools to assume leadership on this issue. We urge them to act to protect all Canadians."

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The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions represents close to 200,000 nurses and student nurses. Our members working in hospitals, long-term care facilities, community health care and our homes.

For further information contact Linda Silas, CFNU President, at 613-526-4661 or lsilas@nursesunions.ca

A copy of the report is available at www.nursesunions.ca