

February 2024

Re: National Pharmacare

The Association of Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC (NNPBC) welcomes the agreement between the federal Liberal government and the federal NDP with respect to a national pharmacare plan. This agreement is an important and historic step in paving the way for the passing of the [Canada Pharmacare Act](#), which is expected to be tabled by March 1, 2024.

The federal Liberal party and the federal NDP party have produced draft legislation that will set out the broader parameters for a national pharmacare program that points to a single payer system with references to the [Canada Health Act](#). In the short term, the plan has options for coverage notably in the areas of contraception and diabetes treatment. While full details are not yet clear such as who will qualify for coverage and which drugs will be covered, this is a positive step in the direction of ensuring universal access to medication.

The move towards a national pharmacare plan echoes the needs of Canadians as expressed in a [2023 survey](#) conducted by the Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions (CFNU).

Of note:

- 87% of Canadians support the implementation of a national pharmacare plan.
- 34% note that inflation is pushing the ability to afford medications out of reach.
- 79% support the federal government taking charge in implementing a pharmacare plan.

Nursing has called for a national pharmacare program for many years recognizing that Canada was the only developed country in the world with a universal plan that did not include pharmacare. In 2019, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) advocated for national pharmacare as key federal election platform. Ensuring that our public system includes a national pharmacare plan means that people will be better able to meet their basic needs and pursue opportunities which enhance the quality of their lives.

Nursing professionals have witnessed the day-to-day implications of a universal health system without a pharmacare plan. Patients have become sicker, and nurses have seen consequences of people forced to forego medication for fear of not being able to afford basic necessities of life including food or housing. Nurses know that those who face poverty and systemic barriers have fewer life choices, face increased physiological and psychological stress and consequently generally have poorer health.

Ensuring that people have access to the medications they need, when they need them through a national pharmacare plan creates a more equitable and just society wherein ability to pay is not the determining factor in assessing the health needs of a population.