



Report to Council

From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

Date: December 17, 2019
Subject: Supporting Universal National Pharmacare

Purpose

To ask that the City of Port Moody Write to the Federal Government in support of the implementation of a national pharmacare strategy as a priority following the 2019 election.

Recommendation

WHEREAS, The City of Port Moody has recognized and has demonstrated over the past years its commitment to the importance of healthy citizens as the foundation of a healthy, engaged and economically vibrant community; and

WHEREAS, The over 3 million Canadians, including many in our local communities, don't take medicines prescribed by their doctors because they can't afford them; and

WHEREAS, Canada is currently the ONLY country with a National Medicare Program that does not have a National Pharmacare Program; and

WHEREAS, The risk of having no insurance for medicines is high among lower income Canadians which includes the service industry, precarious working and seasonal workers; and

WHEREAS, The studies show that adding a National Pharmacare Program to our National Health Care System would lower costs to businesses by over \$8 billion per year, providing Canadian companies competitive advantages in international trade; and

WHEREAS, The recent research confirms that these gains can be achieved with little or no increase in public investment; and

WHEREAS, Municipal government expenses for employee benefits would be significantly reduced by a National Pharmacare Program; and

WHEREAS, A national prescription drug formulary would support better quality prescribing, including reducing dangerous and inappropriate prescribing to Canadian seniors; and

WHEREAS, A National Pharmacare plan is a sound policy, both economically and socially, the City of Port Moody express its support for the creation of a National Pharmacare program as an extension of Canadian Medicare, since health and economic

studies now show that such as policy would improve health in municipalities, give local businesses a competitive advantage in the global marketplace and lower costs for municipal government on taxpayers; therefore be it

BE IT RESOLVED, That the City of Port Moody call on the Federal Government to work with the provinces and territories to develop and implement a Universal Public National Pharmacare program as one of the first orders of business after the 2019 election.

AND THAT this letter be forwarded to all BC municipalities asking to write their support as well.

Background

In 2017, the City of Port Moody wrote to the federal government to support the development of a Nation Pharmacare program (**attachment 1**); this has been initiative supported by the majority of Canadians, but it has yet to come to pass despite support from at least three major parties. Growing health and wealth inequalities impact Port Moody residents, including a growing elder population; BC residents may be hardest hit by lack of universal coverage, despite recent changes to provincial drug coverage, as demonstrated in a 2018 cross-institutional study <https://www.myprincegeorgenow.com/68282/bc-residents-struggling-afford-prescription-drugs/>. Studies have shown that 88% of Canadians support universal medicare as a component of our universal health care system, as was summarized in a brief to the house of commons <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/HESA/Brief/BR8352162/br-external/AngusReidInstitute-e.pdf>.

As Port Moody moves into budget season, it makes sense to push for policies from other sphere of government that will take pressure off of our residents, and indeed off of our corporate coffers, as [studies from the Columbia Institute and Canadian Doctors for Medicare](#) have calculated that local governments across Canada would save millions if such a system was in place, which is why it has been endorsed by the Surrey Board of Trade and the [BC Chamber of Commerce](#).

Now is an opportune time for local governments to remind the federal government that a national pharmacare strategy needs to be a priority.

Discussion

Writings from the [Canadian Labour Congress demonstrate why national universal pharmacare would benefit our residents, our city as a corporation, and small businesses:](#)

Finally, some good news for [the millions of Canadians](#) who have to choose between paying for groceries or their prescription medications.

Canada's Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare has laid out a clear path for public, single-payer, universal pharmacare in its [final report](#).

“The time for universal, single-payer, public pharmacare has come,” writes Dr. Eric Hoskins, the Council’s chair. “This is our generation’s national project: better access to the medicines we need, improved health outcomes and a fairer and more sustainable prescription medicine system.”

This is the unfinished business of medicare, as envisioned by the late Tommy Douglas. As Saskatchewan’s seventh premier, Mr. Douglas pioneered North America’s first universal, single-payer health care system. It would become a cornerstone of Canada’s social safety net and a key pillar of our nation.

We know that a fair society must be one in which every person has the opportunity to succeed and to thrive... we believe that universal, public pharmacare is a necessary step towards greater fairness.

As [numerous studies](#) have shown, millions of Canadians are struggling to afford to pay for their prescription medications. One study found that nearly a million Canadians sacrificed basic needs such as food, and close to a quarter of a million people gave up heating their homes. This lack of affordability is hurting not only people’s health and well-being, but the [economic strength of our communities](#).

The new report demonstrates that every family will save, on average, \$350 per year on medications. It also points out that the average business owner will save about \$750 per employee. That will open up capacity for businesses to increase wages, or expand other types of coverage, including for dental and vision care. It also supports small businesses that find it difficult to compete for workers when they can’t afford to offer drug coverage.

There will be an upfront cost, specifically at the outset, but as time goes on, the money our provincial health care systems will save will be significant. A [recent study](#) found that over 300,000 people had additional doctor visits, 93,000 had to go to the emergency department and 26,000 people were admitted to hospital – all because they couldn’t pay for their medications. That creates a significant burden on the health care system, one that we can alleviate with a national drug plan.

Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated November 12, 2019 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Supporting Universal National Pharmacare be received for information.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications related to this report.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There are no communications or civic engagement initiatives required by the recommendations in this report.

Attachment(s)

1. Delegation Application regarding Pharmacare from May 15, 2018 City of Port Moody Committee of the Whole Meeting