



Pharmacies seek new contract with MOH that reflects expanding contribution to community care

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Regina— As the fall season ramps up exposure risks to seasonal maladies like the flu and pneumonia, as well as COVID-19, Saskatchewan pharmacy is calling for the Province to negotiate a contract that recognizes their role as **essential health care workers** to help contribute to patient health and the quality of health care in the Province.

“Pharmacists are building on our longstanding track record providing access to a wide range of traditional prescription fulfillment and consulting services,” said George Furneaux, Board Chair, Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS). “As we adapt to meet the extraordinary demands of providing safe health care during this pandemic, we’re seeking collaborative discussions with the Province on a new contract that reflects today’s primary health care realities and advances Connected Care in our communities.”

Pharmacies have invested in necessary modifications related to the pandemic in good faith, even though their contract with the Ministry of Health expired on October 31, 2019. Those modifications are significant: at an estimated added total cost of \$34.1 million¹ during the first 13 weeks of the pandemic, and ongoing costs of \$2.5 million per week, Saskatchewan pharmacies are transforming operations such as offering delivery services to provide safe and effective front line essential health care to their patients.

Patients agree that pharmacists have stepped up to the challenge. Nine in 10 Canadians believe pharmacists have stepped up during the pandemic and four out of five Saskatchewan residents view pharmacists as **essential health workers**, according to [research commissioned](#) by the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) and conducted by Abacus Data in April 2020. Three out of four respondents are concerned that some pharmacies might close as a result of COVID-19. Nationally, most Canadians believe that pharmacists’ duties should be expanded to alleviate pressures on other health care professionals. This is supported in further

¹ [NPAC Pharmacy’s Response to COVID-19.](#)

² [CPJ Pharmacists as accessible primary health care providers](#)

research that illustrates patients see their pharmacist up to 10 times more than any other healthcare provider.²

Pharmacists are asking the Province to work with the sector to ensure we mitigate the risks we face **today**. Without a realistic **current contract**, some pharmacies may adjust their services which could impact patient access.

Our experience with flu shots illustrates how patients respond when pharmacists are able to contribute to more accessible and efficient health care. From a standing start just five years ago, there has been steady growth in the number of flu shots administered through pharmacies, and in 2019-2020, over half of the Province's flu injections were administered by pharmacists (up by 22% from the previous year).

Let's continue to ensure patients are able to get access to essential public health and primary care services as close to home as possible. Let's continue to ensure that pharmacists are able to help reduce pressures on other health care providers, particularly when we face potential risks of overwhelming demand in the event of a surge in COVID-19 caseloads.

We ask that the Province recognize pharmacists as essential health workers and community pharmacies as a vital part of the provincial health care solution. We must find a path forward together to build on the growing contribution of the pharmacy sector toward the [Saskatchewan Connected Care Strategy](#), initiated in 2017.

We ask the Province to commit to helping us continue to fulfill the trust placed in us by patients, their families, and our communities.

“Over the years, we have demonstrated that working together, we can improve health care for patients and our communities, and, at the same time, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of primary health care,” said George Furneaux. “Let's not put that progress at risk. We hope the Province will work with us more closely and recognize the pharmacy sector as a vital contributing partner in advancing effective and sustainable primary health care.”

- [Abacus Summary Research](#) – Public trust in pharmacists' response to the pandemic
- [Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada](#) - Pharmacy's response to COVID-19
- [Connected Care in Saskatchewan](#)
- [Canadian Pharmacists Journal](#) – Pharmacists as accessible primary health care providers

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