



Ensuring fair livelihood for pharmacists will help expand patient access to local healthcare

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The agreement between the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA) and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association (CGPA) announced January 29, 2018, will generate considerable savings when it takes effect later this spring.

The Saskatchewan government states that the initiative will generate "...\$6 million in savings in the first year and up to \$50 million in savings over the next five years for the Saskatchewan Drug Plan." These benefits will come at a cost, however.

Saskatchewan's 365 community pharmacies—who were not consulted in the negotiations—could collectively lose as much as \$36 million in annual revenues, even as their operating costs are rising. Current estimates of potential revenue losses per pharmacy fall between \$85,000 to \$100,000 per year. This represents a major threat to many pharmacies that have invested in expanded services to support better care, working closely with the Province over the past decade.

PAS and its member pharmacies seek to ensure that savings are invested to foster the value-added contribution that pharmacies and pharmacists are making to Saskatchewan.

"We are very supportive of more affordable medications, especially when governments collaborate with all stakeholders on major changes," said Paul Bazin, Chair, Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS). "We must also recognize and address the unintended impacts on contributing stakeholders, such as the pharmacy sector. We must ensure patients continue to have access to services that advance greater quality, efficiency, and affordability."

The results are bearing fruit. For example, in the 2017-2018 flu season, Saskatchewan pharmacists have delivered 118,000 flu shots so far, up 29% from the previous year, and double the number of vaccines delivered in 2015-16, the first year pharmacies offered this service.

This reflects the high trust patients place in their local pharmacist. As pharmacies continue to invest in the provision of a [growing range of services](#), they will further increase the value and contribution they make to primary local health care. That investment reduces pressure in other areas of healthcare, such as emergency rooms, clinics, and doctors' offices, while offering patients convenient hometown access.

Saskatchewan's 365 community pharmacies also make a significant contribution to the social and economic health of our province. According to a recent study by the [Conference Board of Canada](#), in 2016, the most recent year for which data are available, the pharmacy sector generated an estimated \$305 million in provincial gross domestic product (GDP)¹, comprising nearly 8 percent of the provincial health sector GDP and employing nearly 5,800 people across Saskatchewan.

"We are demonstrating that we can adapt and change, however, as with any profession, we need to earn a fair livelihood, and tomorrow's pharmacists want to believe there are employment opportunities," said PAS Chair Paul Bazin. "Our collaboration with the Province and others is all about working together to ensure that we continue to build on the progress of recent years, with expanded patient access to hometown health care and a thriving pharmacy sector."

Backgrounder:

- [The economic footprint of Saskatchewan pharmacies: 2018 Conference Board of Canada Research](#)

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¹ GDP or Gross Domestic Product is defined as the monetary value of the goods and services produced in a given period, usually annually, as a measure of economic output.