



CPHA PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION BRIEF 2022

Investing in Canada's Health Workforce

Health-care workers have been the heroes of COVID-19 pandemic. Canada's 45,000 pharmacists and pharmacy teams are no exception. Pharmacies remained open for their communities during the worst of the pandemic and expanded their practices into public health, becoming a leading provider of COVID-19 vaccinations and information in many parts of Canada.

Throughout the pandemic, pharmacists across Canada:

- Provided over 17 million COVID-19 vaccines
- Stayed open when other primary care settings were closed
- Expanded their scope and services to fill health-care gaps and better support patients, including:
 - Enhanced care for patients prescribed opioids and other controlled substances
 - Expanded prescribing
 - Expanded vaccine authority and administering to young children
 - COVID-19 testing and information



The work and sacrifices of pharmacists and other health-care providers over the last two years are truly inspiring. However, the pandemic has put immense pressure on pharmacy teams, who are now at high risk of suffering from burnout, and it will have a long-term impact on their mental health and wellness. While some contributing factors such as lack of PPE appear to be easing, other significant factors like staff shortages and lack of access to mental health supports will continue to burden the health-care workforce without targeted support and funding by government.

According to a recent CPhA survey of Canadian pharmacists and pharmacy technicians (Jan. 2022):

- Only 1 in 5 consider their mental health and well-being to be good or very good
- Almost all (92%) pharmacy professionals are at risk of burnout
- Half (51%) indicated that inadequate staffing is having a severe negative impact on their mental health and well-being
- Almost half (48%) have experienced abuse or harassment from patients at least weekly
- During the pandemic, the impact of work on mental health and well-being has caused 72% to consider leaving their position (40%) or the pharmacy profession (32%)



Health-care workers across Canada have experienced trauma throughout the pandemic. They cannot continue to provide the necessary care for patients now and into the future without government investments to ensure the health and wellness of the health-care workforce.

We recommend that the federal government invest in two key areas in Budget 2022:

1. Providing mental health resources and supports for health-care workers

The mental health of Canadians has been deeply impacted by COVID-19 and we will likely see the long-term impacts for years to come. Health providers have been particularly impacted and have reported increased levels of stress and burnout. We therefore strongly urge the federal government to:

- Provide \$30 million over 2 years towards a mental health fund that would be used to increase mental health supports for health-care workers and their immediate family members as well as to support groups, organizations and associations to develop specific mental health resources for their unique needs.

2. Enhancing HHR strategies federally and provincially to strengthen the recruitment and retention of health-care workers

The pandemic has put a spotlight on the importance of a health workforce that can adapt and respond to the evolving needs of Canadians. Increasingly, care is being provided outside of hospitals through community settings. While pharmacists operate in both, community pharmacies are best known for their accessibility to patients and are often the first point of care for patients and their family members.

Over the past two years, pharmacy teams have been enabled to provide more and more services, filling gaps in health care in many jurisdictions while also facing labour shortages. In light of the pandemic, it is critical that the federal government invest in an HHR strategy that includes all health providers and provide targeted funding to ensure that the needs of patients are met at the right time in the right place.

We urge the government to support the following HHR priorities:

- Prioritize immigration of health-care workers and increase funding and resources to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to clear the backlog of applications
- Provide \$200 million over 2 years toward a federal program to subsidize employers providing practical experience and training to internationally trained health-care workers
- Increase funding through the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) to streamline, simplify and reduce costs for foreign credential recognition in Canada
- Provide \$250 million in federal financial incentives and/or loan forgiveness for Canadian and internationally trained health-care workers
- In partnership with provinces and territories, provide \$400 million over two years in federal funding to:
 - Address critical health-care worker shortages, with targeted funding for specific health settings and regions (e.g., community pharmacy)
 - Support regulators in streamlining and accelerating health-care worker licensing/registration processes

About CPhA



Canadian Association des
Pharmacists pharmaciens
Association du Canada

The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) is the uniting national voice of pharmacy and the pharmacist profession in Canada. As pharmacists undertake an enhanced role in the delivery of health-care services, CPhA ensures that the profession is recognized as a national leader in health care, influencing the policies, programs, budgets and initiatives affecting the profession and the health of Canadians.

More information is available at www.pharmacists.ca.

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