



# National Call to Action in Support of Pharmacy Professionals

Canadian health-care providers have made incredible sacrifices throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Pharmacists and their staff are no exception. Pharmacies have remained open for their communities during the worst of the pandemic and have expanded their practices into public health, becoming a leading provider of COVID-19 vaccinations and information in many parts of Canada. However, the pandemic and the current Omicron variant are pushing pharmacists and their staff to the breaking point. Pharmacies are struggling with staff shortages, staff exposure to COVID-19, administrative overload, as well as testing and PPE access issues. Pharmacy professionals require more support from all levels of government to continue to serve their communities and keep themselves and their patients safe and healthy.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association urges governments and regulators to implement the following calls to action to support the profession of pharmacy through this very difficult time.

## National Calls to Action

1. All provinces and regulators should endeavour to remove unnecessary administrative and regulatory burdens on pharmacies (e.g., separate and overly complex platforms for vaccine scheduling, billing and record keeping) and support pharmacy teams in being as efficient as possible in the provision of vaccines and regular pharmacy operations during this period of heightened workloads and reduced staffing.
2. All governments should ensure dedicated access to COVID-19 testing and PPE (e.g., N95) for pharmacy staff, with particular consideration for pharmacies providing COVID-19 vaccines. These resources should be provided free of complex registration and reporting requirements.
3. Governments should help expand the labour supply of pharmacists and pharmacy support staff. This can include assistance with costs associated with higher wages as well as financial relief and other resources to help pharmacy technicians and foreign trained pharmacy professionals become licensed.
4. All governments and regulators should enable full scope of pharmacy practice to ensure that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians can provide the most appropriate, timely care to their patients. For example, pharmacists in some areas and pharmacy technicians in many parts of Canada are still unable to administer vaccines. Further, enabling all pharmacists across Canada to provide therapeutic substitution or prescribe for common conditions would expand access to and streamline patient care as well as maximize efficiencies in the health care system.
5. Health services provided by pharmacists should be publicly funded as they are for nurses and physicians and, where appropriate, pharmacists should be enabled to provide these services virtually to minimize contact and risk of exposure.
6. Governments and regulators should work to harmonize full scope of pharmacy practice across Canada to improve health equity and enable pharmacists and pharmacy resources to travel between provinces to relieve pressures in emergency situations.
7. All governments should ensure that pharmacy staff have access to the necessary resources (such as access to childcare, mental health resources, etc.) to help pharmacies maintain necessary staffing.
8. Governments should continually integrate pharmacists/pharmacy groups into policy planning decisions that could impact the profession (e.g., expanding vaccine eligibility) and provide pharmacy with advance communication of such policy changes to ensure efficient implementation.

