



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pharmacare Bill Confirmed to Cost Billions More and Eliminate Patient Choice

OTTAWA, ON (October 2, 2024) – Why burden taxpayers with an extra \$2.5 billion to take over employer-sponsored benefits plans that already pay the costs of diabetes and contraception medication for many Canadian families with workplace health benefits? The current federal pharmacare legislation (Bill C-64) threatens to balloon in cost, disrupt coverage and limit patient choice, and millions of Canadians stand to lose portions of their employer-sponsored drug plans as a direct result of this government's policy choice.

Today, the Smart Health Benefits Coalition (SHBC) called on the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology to urgently amend Bill C-64 to ensure that Canadians with these existing comprehensive benefits will not be affected by this legislation. With the committee beginning its clause-by-clause review of the bill on Thursday, decisive action is needed. Additionally, the SHBC wrote to the Parliamentary Budget Officer requesting he update the cost analysis of Bill C-64, based on the Minister of Health's recent comments confirming that all prescriptions for these drugs will be paid for by the taxpayer, and no other benefit plan – skyrocketing the cost by at least \$2.5 billion more than what Canadians have been told.

In its current form, Bill C-64 proposes a 'universal', 'single-payer' system that would provide 'first-dollar' coverage for contraceptives and diabetes medications, effectively replacing existing employer coverage for these same drugs, with the taxpayer picking up the full tab. This policy choice will undermine well-functioning systems currently in place and lead to unnecessary complications for patients while siphoning off billions of dollars that could do more to support Canadians and other at-risk parts of our healthcare system.

"Patient care must come first, not politics when it comes to pharmacare," said Carlyne Eagan, Principal Representative of the Smart Health Benefits Coalition (SHBC). "The Senate needs to amend Bill C-64 because as written, it threatens the existing coverage millions of Canadians rely on through employer-sponsored plans, pushing them into a one-size-fits-all public system that could result in delays and restricted access to critical medications. Even critical patient advocates like Diabetes Canada are calling on the Senate to make amendments that do not harm existing coverage Canadians rely on."

SHBC is advocating for targeted coverage to support uninsured and underinsured Canadians while keeping existing benefit plans. "It does not make sense for the federal government to pay billions in new money to cover the cost of drugs for people who already have comprehensive coverage," Eagan added. "Canadian taxpayer dollars are better used to cover even more drugs for those Canadians who don't have coverage today, without dismantling the system for everyone else." If amended, C-64 could allow for 'multi-payer' models, filling the gap and freeing up those extra dollars to add more drugs to the formulary or support other health system priorities Canadians need.

About the Smart Health Benefits Coalition (SHBC): The Smart Health Benefits Coalition (SHBC) is a united advocate for smart, innovative solutions that result in timely and positive change for uninsured and underinsured Canadians. Formed in 2023, the SHBC is comprised of over a thousand workplace advisors across every province who help employers implement and manage their group benefits and group retirement plans. Through six member organizations, SHBC's local businesspeople support more than 65,000 small and medium-sized private, public and non-profit employers with their employee drug plans,

including over 4,800 union member drug plans. Together, these leading organizations support robust benefit plans for 10 million Canadians.

#cdnpoli #pharmacare #diabetes #insulin #contraception #billC64 #SenateofCanada

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