Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare Secretariat

Brooke Claxton Building

70 Colombine Driveway

Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

Dear Deputy Executive Director, Engagement at the Secretariat for the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare,

# RE: FEEDBACK ON A NATIONAL PHARMACARE PROGRAM FOR ALL PEOPLE IN CANADA

One in ten people in Canada cannot afford the prescription drugs, and those who can pay face the highest drug costs among developed nations. People in Canada spent more than $30 billion in 2016 to fill over 600 million prescriptions, according to the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Nearly 1 million people in Canada each year have to make the choice between paying for medications they desperately need or paying for other necessities like food and utilities.

Good health care services are not just a social determinant of health, but a basic human right. Under the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* which Canada signed onto in 1976, all people in Canada have the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health – and that includes necessary medications.

A staggering 91 percent of Canadians saying they are in favour of a national pharmacare plan, and health experts have illustrated that the current patchwork system of different provincial, territorial and federal plans that sometimes are exclusive to seniors and often still include fees, co-pays, and deductibles is not adequate. Public pharmacare is most critical for marginalized communities who do not qualify for existing public pharmacare supplements and are less likely to have access to meaningful employment, and thereby less likely to receive prescription coverage through their workplace.

Leaders in the healthcare and labour fields have developed critical frameworks for a national pharmacare system, including the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) and the Canadian Labour Congress. The CFNU created a Roadmap to a Rational Drug Policy in 2014 with effective reforms that could serve as a model national pharmacare plan.

I am calling on the federal government to implement a National Pharmacare Plan that is universal, affordable, and accessible. The program should be financed through the elimination of tax subsidies to private drug insurance plans and an earmarked progressive tax to help facilitate price negotiations for patented medicines, bulk-buying of generic medicines, and overall government accountability.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title