



CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF NURSES UNIONS
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS



CANADIAN DOCTORS
FOR MEDICARE | MÉDECINS CANADIENS
POUR LE RÉGIME PUBLIC



Canadian Labour Congress
Congrès du travail du Canada

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Re: Minister Morneau should recuse himself from the pharmacare file given his perceived conflict of interest

We write to express our dismay at comments made today by Finance Minister Bill Morneau before the Economic Club of Canada regarding pharmacare. In the absence of any terms of reference for the newly-announced Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare (ACINP), Minister Morneau has already presupposed the outcome. His comments today suggest a sharp turn away from the evidence-based pharmacare recommendations that every commission ever convened on the topic has made, as well as the commitments of Morneau's own Liberal Party at their most recent convention.

In his comments before the Economic Club of Canada regarding the ACINP, Minister Morneau differentiated between a "national pharmacare strategy" and a "national pharmacare plan," calling them "two very different things." He went on to say, "we recognize that we need a strategy to deal with the fact that not everyone has access and we need to do it in a way that's responsive – that deals with the gaps and that doesn't throw out the system we currently have."

Minister Morneau's comments are incorrect: Canadians have witnessed decades of research, consultations, Royal Commissions and parliamentary studies which have overwhelmingly recommended a national pharmacare plan, not piecemeal coverage. Moreover, after receiving testimony from 99 expert witnesses, the Commons health committee is on the verge of unveiling a landmark report to Parliament which is expected to recommend the same: a universal pharmacare *plan*.

Minister Morneau's comments contradict the overwhelming evidence and threaten to undermine the work of the ACINP before it even begins. We request that he retract these statements and recuse himself from involvement with the ACINP. This is a vital step to eliminate any perceived conflict of interest. To ensure its legitimacy, the ACINP must be guided exclusively by evidence and public interest.

In his speech, the Minister also stated "my firm [Morneau Shepell] was the largest provider of benefits consultancy services in Canada." With these deep ties to the private firm Morneau Shepell, we are concerned that the Finance Minister may not be approaching the issue of fundamental change in national drug insurance policies with an exclusive focus on evidence in the public interest.

As health professionals and labour leaders, we are committed to the wellbeing of patients and the effectiveness of our health care services, it is our hope that insurance industry and pharmaceutical industry interests will not play a role in the implementation of universal public pharmacare. Canada must join the rest of the industrialized world and establish what the evidence shows works best – a universal, public pharmacare system similar to our universal health care system.



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We remain optimistic about the appointment of Dr. Eric Hoskins to chair the ACINP. With his track record in Ontario, as a public official committed to the wellbeing of patients, he is the right person for the job. We look forward to working collaboratively with Dr. Hoskins and the ACINP to assemble a blueprint for the implementation of a national pharmacare plan by early 2019.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Silas'.

Linda Silas, RN, BScN
President, Canadian Federation of
Nurses Unions

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Raza'.

Dr. Danyaal Raza, MD MPH CCFP
Chair, Canadian Doctors for
Medicare

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Yussuff'.

Hassan Yussuff
President, Canadian Labour
Congress