



Pharmacare in Canada by the Numbers

Inadequate access

- Nearly 25% of households include someone who is not taking their prescription medicines as prescribed because of cost.¹
- Approximately 8.4 million working people living in Canada (self-employed and in paid employment) do not have employer-based health benefits.²
- One in 10 patients cannot afford to take their prescribed medicines at all.³
- Research in CFNU's *Body Count* suggests that about 1,000 patients die each year from just two health conditions, diabetes and ischemic heart disease, because of the prohibitive cost of prescription drugs.⁴

High cost for governments, individuals and business

- Canada's per capita prescription drug prices are the third highest in the world, behind only the U.S. and Switzerland.⁵
- Prescription drug costs have risen dramatically in the past 20 years, surpassing physician fees to become the second most expensive category in the delivery of Canadian health care.⁶
- From 2006 to 2015, Canada wasted \$62 billion health care dollars without pharmacare.⁷
- We continue to waste \$7.3 billion per year, equaling \$14,000 squandered health care dollars every minute of every day, without pharmacare.⁸
- People with little or no coverage spend more than \$6 billion per year out of pocket on medicines they need.⁹
- The proportion of out-of-pocket expenditures for prescription drugs has risen to 22% over the past few years, representing a significant and growing financial burden for families.¹⁰
- Similarly, Canadian businesses are increasingly seeing their bottom lines eroded by the high costs of extended health insurance programs that cover increasingly expensive pharmaceuticals.

Potential savings

- CFNU's *Roadmap to a Rational Pharmacare Policy in Canada* estimated savings of between \$9 and 11 billion.¹¹
- Steve Morgan estimated the costs of a universal pharmacare plan in an article published in 2015 and found universal public drug coverage would reduce overall total spending on prescription drugs in Canada by \$7.3 billion per year with costs to government increasing by about \$1 billion.¹²
- In September 2017, in a costing document the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) conservatively estimated the annual savings potential of a national pharmacare plan at \$4.2 billion.¹³

Support for pharmacare

- House of Commons Standing Committee on Health¹⁴
- Over 280 Canadian academics¹⁵
- The Canadian Labour Congress representing 3.3 million workers across Canada¹⁶
- The Canadian public: 91% support a national prescription drug plan¹⁷
- Municipal governments, provincial governments and business groups, including the B.C. Chamber of Commerce¹⁸

Sources

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- ⁴ Lopert, R., Morgan, S., Docteur, E. (2018). *Body Count*. Ottawa : CFNU.
- ⁵ House of Commons Standing Committee on Health. (2018). *Pharmacare Now: Prescription Medicine Coverage for All Canadians*. Retrieved from <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/HESA/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=8837577>
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- ⁷ Mackenzie, H. (2016). *Down the Drain: How Canada Has Wasted \$62 Billion Health Care Dollars without Pharmacare*. Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions. Retrieved from https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Down_The_Drain_Pharmacare_Report_December_2017.pdf
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- ¹⁰ Ibid.
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- ¹² Morgan, S.G., M. Law, J. R. Daw, L. Abraham and D. Martin. (2015). Estimated Cost of Universal Public Coverage of Prescription Drugs in Canada. *Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)*, 187(7): 491–97. doi:10.1503/cmaj.141564.
- ¹³ PBO. (2017). *Federal Cost of a National Pharmacare Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/en/blog/news/Pharmacare>
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- ¹⁵ Morgan, S.G., D. Martin, MA Gagnon, B Mintzes, J.R. Daw, and J. Lexchin. (2015). *Pharmacare 2020: The future of drug coverage in Canada*. Vancouver, Pharmaceutical Policy Research Collaboration, University of British Columbia Retrieved from: <http://pharmacare2020.ca/>
- ¹⁶ Canadian Labour Congress. http://www.aplanforeveryone.ca/why_pharmacare
- ¹⁷ Angus Reid. (2015). *Prescription drug access and affordability an issue for nearly a quarter of all Canadian households*. <http://angusreid.org/prescription-drugs-canada/> 25 June 2017
- ¹⁸ Canadian Doctors for Medicare. (2016, June 7). *Support for pharmacare escalates in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca/Press-Releases/support-for-pharmacare-escalates-in-canada.html>