

# Pharmacare

The issue of drug coverage has gained public prominence and public support over the last several years. Canada is the only OECD country with a universal healthcare system that does not include universal prescription drug coverage. In recent polls, 88% of Canadians supported the creation of a national pharmacare system, and Canadian businesses also favoured investing in such a program

This public support is driven by rising drug costs, declining accessibility, and resulting significant health consequences. With as many as one in five Canadian families unable to afford medications they are prescribed, and significant pressures on hospitals and emergency rooms for non-adherence related intakes and admissions, the inaccessibility of prescription medications is an important health concern.

Recent studies that show Canadians are paying substantially more for medications than residents of other OECD nations are equally distressing, with drug costs at 30% above the OECD average. These high costs are, in part, a function of a fragmented, multi-payer system. Canadians access prescription medications through over 100 public sector programs administered by 14 governments as well as countless private insurance policies purchased by private-sector employers, Canadian families, and by governments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels for their employees. Universal drug coverage would have a substantial impact on this patchwork of programs and systems, resulting in savings in both the public and the private sectors. With multiple prescription drug payers (i.e. private drug plans, provincial and territorial drug plans) engaged in their own pricing negotiations, the Canadian health care system is unable to leverage the purchasing power of a single-payer system which would result in significantly lower drug prices.

