

**Association canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants retraités**

**Canadian Association of Retired Teachers**

President’s Message

October 30, 2024

Dear ACER-CART Colleagues,

Our sincere **Thank You** to all who accessed the ACER-CART website last spring, read the three messages posted re: **Bill C-64: An Act Respecting Pharmacare,** and participated in our “Share Your Voice” campaign that advocated for a national pharmacare program.

Bill C-64 passed Third Reading in the Senate without amendments on October 10, 2024, and received Royal Assent on that same date. The legislation immediately came into force and is now law.

The Federal Minister of Health, Honourable Mark Holland, will now be required to negotiate bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories to provide universal, single-payer, first-dollar access to a range of contraception and diabetes medications as the first phase of a national pharmacare program.

The Act sets out certain powers and obligations of the Minister to prepare a list of essential medications and related products under a national formulary and to develop a national bulk purchasing strategy. Both obligations must be implemented no later than one year after the legislation received Royal Assent.

The legislation also calls for the development of a National Strategy for rare diseases and to improve the accessibility and affordability for catastrophic drugs for Canadians. At the present time, many of these biologic drugs are very expensive and therefore are not available on most provincial drug formularies.

The Minister is also required to establish a committee of experts, no later than the end of November, and to provide for its membership to make recommendations respecting options for the operation and financing of a national, universal, single-payer pharmacare program.

British Columbia has already signed a memorandum of agreement with the federal government to provide coverage of diabetes and birth control

medications. Manitoba has also indicated that it is prepared to sign a similar memorandum and has indicated that it would use the savings from the coverage of contraceptive and diabetes medications to provide new and more expensive medications to its provincial formulary.

**What’s next?** ACER-CART believes that this is the first phase of the program and is now advocating that certain antibiotics, cholesterol medicines, blood pressure, and psychological medications are added to the national formulary as the second phase.

Having our voices heard is so important. We must not be complacent in believing Bill C-64 provides a universal pharmacare program; we must keep the pressure on federal and provincial politicians, and advocate for an expanded program. Your voices are now needed to ensure bilateral agreements are negotiated and the program expanded to deliver a true sustainable, single-payer national pharmacare program.

Yours sincerely,



Bill Berryman

President ACER-CART