Newfoundland and Labrador government needs to catch up to the rest of the country in pharmacist authority

“Pharmacists could play a key role to help the province increase health care access”

—Stephen Reid,
Executive Director,
Pharmacists’
Association of
Newfoundland and
Labrador

Pharmacists in Newfoundland and Labrador are calling on the provincial government to expand their authority and scope of practice as quickly as possible, saying that pharmacists have lagged well behind their counterparts in other provinces for too long.

In a study submitted to government in August of 2013, the Pharmacists’ Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) estimated that expanding pharmacist professional services so that they are comparable to those of most other provinces would save Newfoundland and Labrador at least \$165 million over 5 years.

“We are very far behind almost everyone else,” says Stephen Reid, executive director of PANL. “The only real expansion the province has committed to is giving pharmacists the authority to immunize for flu but they still haven’t revealed the terms of compensation.”

Like many provincial governments, Newfoundland and Labrador has reduced generic drug prices and has promised to re-invest a portion of the savings in pharmacist services. “The government keeps talking about re-investing \$37 million from generic drug savings but they have never outlined exactly what they are going to do,” says Mr. Reid. “So far they have allocated \$1 million in extra compensation for 2014 and 2015—which translates into about \$200 per pharmacy.”

In its study, *The Pharmacist Option: Leveraging Newfoundland and Labrador’s Pharmacists for Cost-Effective Health Care Delivery*, PANL details the savings the province could achieve by using pharmacists’ skills to provide expanded medication reviews,

monitoring for medication adherence, smoking cessation, prescribing for minor ailments and other services.

According to Mr. Reid, the slow pace of pharmacy reform in the province is all the more troubling because of the aging of the population and the fact that so many people live in rural, remote communities.

More than 50% of the pharmacies in the province are in these more isolated communities, where pharmacists are often the only licensed health care professionals, says the PANL executive director. And many of the residents are older.

“Pharmacists could play a key role to help the province increase health care access for those now retired and living in these communities throughout the island and in Labrador,” he says.

The association hasn’t received any firm commitments from the province’s health minister, Susan Sullivan, since she received the PANL study. As a first step, the association would like to see the government move quickly on a measure it has already approved—influenza immunization authority.

“Immunization authority for pharmacists has been successful in Alberta because of the accessibility of the service they provide. We have nowhere near that level of access or capability here in this province,” Mr. Reid says.

Statistics Canada reports that in 2012, the flu immunization rate was 23.3% in Newfoundland and Labrador—the second-lowest among the provinces (after Quebec at 22.3%).

DOI: 10.1177/1715163513508731

Manitoba pharmacists pass new regulations for expanded scope of practice envisioned 7 years ago

A journey that began for Manitoba’s pharmacy profession close to 7 years ago passed a critical milestone in late July of 2013—when members of the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association (MPhA) approved regulations

supporting the province’s Pharmaceutical Act of December 2006.

In a message sent to the membership on July 30, MPhA president Kyle MacNair announced that members had voted 90%