Election 2015: Communicating pharmacy's priorities

CANADIANS WILL BE HEADING TO THE POLLS IN A federal election widely expected to occur October 19, 2015. Although the pundits would argue that political parties have been campaigning for months already, most election-related activities, such as public debates and door-to-door campaigning by candidates, will begin to ramp up in late summer and fall. As the 2015 federal election campaign moves into high gear, the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) has identified key recommendations and messages for federal political candidates on 3 key national issues of importance to the profession. These 3 issues include the following:

- **Pan-Canadian Pharmacare Program:**

CPhA is seeking commitment from all federal political parties to work with the provinces/territories, health care professionals and other stakeholders towards the development of a pan-Canadian pharmacare program. Such a program must address coverage gaps between public and private systems, protect Canadians from undue financial hardship and guarantee access to a stable supply of clinically and cost-effective medications. Furthermore, the inclusion of access to pharmacy services under a pharmacare model is key to achieving better health outcomes and cost savings.

- **National Plan for e-Prescribing:** CPhA is calling on all parties to work with the provinces/territories, health care professionals and other stakeholders to implement a seamless e-prescribing system in Canada. CPhA is looking for the federal government to support the development and implementation of a common national standard for e-prescribing that ensures that Canadians' prescription information can be more easily shared and accessed between relevant health providers, while respecting patient privacy and confidentiality.

- **Strengthened National Immunization Strategy for Canada:**

Given Canada's relatively low rates of immunization compared with other industrialized countries, CPhA is calling for a revamped National Immunization Strategy. The goal of a revamped strategy would be to increase immunization rates through a comprehensive approach that would include further expanding pharmacists' scope of practice to administer vaccines. The National Strategy would also target increased research, comparable access and enhanced education/outreach, including building a partnership with the provinces/territories and health professionals to increase public awareness of the importance of vaccinations.

In the lead-up to October 19, CPhA is encouraging pharmacists and other Canadians to promote and discuss these key recommendations with political candidates from all parties. To assist you, CPhA has assembled an election website at www.pharmacists.ca/election. On this website, you will find a print-ready brochure that summarizes the key recommendations, a more detailed platform document that provides background and rationale for these recommendations and an online tool that allows you to quickly and easily contact the candidates in your riding and send them messages of support for the above-mentioned priorities.

Elections provide voters with an excellent opportunity to learn about and pin down the views of candidates and political parties on specific issues. This election is no different. Go to www.pharmacists.ca/election to share your thoughts with your candidates, and help CPhA advance these core issues. ■

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