

Alberta Pharmacists Alarmed by Government Decisions That Undermine Patient Access to Primary Care

EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA, June 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ --

Community pharmacists are expressing serious concern over a series of recent government decisions that will significantly restrict access to care for the province's most vulnerable patients. These policy shifts directly threaten Albertans' ability to access affordable, timely, and trusted healthcare, particularly among seniors, low-income individuals, and those living in rural or underserved communities. Government's decisions appear disconnected from both the data, evidence, and the patients' experience.

The Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) believes that all Albertans deserve access to safe, effective, and convenient care, regardless of where they live or how much they earn.



Alberta Pharmacists' Association

Three Government Policy Changes, One Profound Impact on Patient Care:

[1. Seniors' Prescription Co-Pays Rising from \\$25 to \\$35](#)

An out of pocket increase to prescription medication co-pays for seniors will impact thousands of Albertans who live on fixed incomes and manage multiple chronic conditions. Even modest increases in cost can force difficult choices between essential medications, food, housing, or utilities.

For many, this decision results in a 40% increase. For example, if a Senior or Albertan with Non-Group drug coverage is currently paying a copay of \$25 x 4 prescriptions totaling \$100, by April 2026 this will increase to \$35 x 4 = \$140.

Pharmacoeconomics research clearly shows that increases in out-of-pocket expenses lead to lower medication adherence, skipped doses, and delayed refills; especially among the elderly and those facing financial strain. This results in worsened health outcomes, more frequent emergency visits, and avoidable hospitalizations that increase costs to the healthcare system.

[2. COVID-19 Vaccines Removed from Pharmacies](#)

Pharmacists have been Alberta's most accessible and trusted providers of COVID-19 vaccines since the start of the pandemic, administering over 4.5 million doses. This decision removes vaccine access from 278 communities where pharmacies often represent the only local point of care, especially in rural, remote, and underserved areas. Government's decision to order 485,000 doses for next year is insufficient when nearly 800,000 Albertans were vaccinated in 2024/25.

Albertans without internet access, a fixed address, ability to pre-book appointments, transportation, or ability to pay will be disproportionately impacted. These individuals often access their pharmacist precisely because no other options are available. While other jurisdictions are scaling up access to vaccines in pharmacies, this government is doing the opposite. Centralizing vaccination to public health clinics will increase system costs, limit access at fewer locations with restricted hours, and now add out of pocket costs for those wishing to be vaccinated.

RxA is incredibly disappointed to see this government identify vaccine waste as the reason to remove vaccine from pharmacies, when pharmacists follow the same program rules as other providers. Government's past provider direction was to vaccinate with preference over the potential for wastage. This year, wastage will be insignificant due to the availability of single dose packaging.

[3. Cutbacks to Funded Chronic Disease Care](#)

Alberta's most complex patients—those living with diabetes, hypertension, mental illness, COPD, or multiple co-morbidities—rely on structured support from pharmacists for regular follow-up, medication management, and care planning. Recent cuts to Care Plans and Followup eliminates a critical funding mechanism for pharmacist managed chronic care. No alternate funding or model has been identified.

These services are essential for pharmacists to identify complications early, prevent adverse events, and maintain patients' health. For many Albertans, particularly those without a family doctor—pharmacists are their only consistent provider. Patients with the most complicated and

vulnerable health needs may now find themselves without accessible, consistent care anywhere in the system.

RxA is deeply troubled that these decisions were made without consulting frontline pharmacist providers. Each of these changes—on its own—would have negative consequences. Together, they represent a profound threat to patient care across the province.

Albertans deserve better. RxA calls on the provincial government to work collaboratively with the pharmacy profession to ensure that healthcare policy reflects equitable access, patient needs, protects vulnerable populations, and maintains the integrity of our primary care system.

Alberta pharmacists have proven their value—not only during crisis, but every single day as the front-line healthcare providers Albertans trust. These changes make it harder for individuals to receive timely, affordable, and effective care. RxA urges the government to re-engage with pharmacists to ensure that decisions reflect real-world implications and always put Albertans first.

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