



**Neighbourhood
Pharmacy**
Association of Canada

Association canadienne
**des pharmacies
de quartier**



**ONTARIO
PHARMACISTS
ASSOCIATION**

November 26, 2020

Heather Watt
Chief of Staff
Ministry of Health
College Park 5th Flr, 777 Bay St
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Heather,

We're writing today to begin a discussion about how pharmacy can play a vital role in partnership with government to ensure successful roll-out of a COVID-19 vaccine.

First, though, we wanted to thank you again for our meeting last month and for pulling the group together to discuss solutions to the flu shot campaign. Since we last spoke, we have been able to get additional flu shots to Ontarians via pharmacies thanks to the efforts of your team in aiding us with redistribution and further ordering. We also appreciate the many policy changes that were supported by the Ministry of Health before the flu season which had a positive impact on this year's campaign and helped secure record-breaking vaccine uptake, including:

- Enabling seniors to get the High Dose flu shot in pharmacies. This not only ensured more seniors were vaccinated but offered more safe, trusted and convenient local access points for seniors during the pandemic.
- Providing pharmacists with the regulatory flexibility to transport and administer flu shots outside of pharmacy. This empowered pharmacists across the province to set up vaccination clinics in fire halls, police stations, and retirement homes, as well as clinics serving rural and remote regions, ensuring our most vulnerable had safe and easy access to vital protections.
- Leveraging the pharmaceutical supply chain to support flu vaccine distribution to all pharmacies in the province, which increased efficiencies and helped reduce wastage and vaccine spoilage.

While this flu season certainly presented challenges, we are proud of our collective achievements which were only made possible by the strong partnership we have with government. Since the pandemic began, we have learned a lot about how we can best work together to ensure the people of Ontario have access to the vaccines they need. When we spoke last month, we began discussing lessons learned from this year's flu season and how we can work together to ensure successful planning for a COVID-19 vaccine that is now within reach.

We are eager to get started. That's why we were excited to hear that government has announced General Rick Hillier to lead Ontario's COVID-19 distribution planning.

As always, Ontario pharmacists stand ready to help however they can. This year's successful flu shot campaign is a strong proof point that Ontarians trust their pharmacists to administer critical vaccines. As of November 18, 2020, pharmacists have administered approximately 1.55M doses of flu vaccine, representing approximately 97% of the total doses distributed to pharmacies. This speaks to the trust Ontarians place in pharmacists to administer critical vaccines, and the successes that can be achieved in rapidly deploying mass vaccination through local pharmacy. As the most accessible health care provider, with access points in every corner of the province – from urban downtowns to remote northern communities – pharmacists have a unique ability to protect those who are hardest to reach.

As Minister Elliott mentioned yesterday, not only do we need to be able to vaccinate people, but we also, critically, must be able to track and record and follow up to administer a second dose. Pharmacists are uniquely prepared to do this, with expertise monitoring our patients' medications, real-time tracking and reporting capability, and experience following up to ensure medication adherence.

We believe the voice and expertise of pharmacy must be included on the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force to ensure its success. As experts on medication and vaccine management, storage, and distribution, pharmacy will be a great resource to Mr. Hillier and other members of the COVID-19 vaccine planning team. We need to get this right – and we can help to do that.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you again at your earliest convenience to discuss how Ontario's pharmacists can support the Ontario government as you work on a COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan and how it fits into a broader vaccine strategy that ensures other routine childhood and adult immunization needs do not go unmet. We look forward to continuing our strong collaboration to protect all Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Sandra Hanna, RPh.
Chief Executive Officer
Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada



Justin Bates
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Pharmacists Association