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News Release

Pharmacare Bill Honours Banting Legacy

OTTAWA, FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2024—Senators have begun consideration of historic legislation marking Canada’s first and vital steps toward a universal, public, single-payer pharmacare system.

Introduced by the Minister of Health in February 2024, [Bill C-64](#) outlines a plan to work with all Indigenous Peoples, provinces and territories willing to provide universal, public, single-payer coverage of necessary medicines, starting with essential contraceptive and diabetes medications.

A century ago, Canadian scientists Banting, Best and Macleod resisted the impulse to personally profit from the discovery of insulin. Banting considered it unethical to profit of people’s need for life-saving medicine. Measures in Bill C-64 to ensure universal access to diabetes medication honour this legacy.

Despite Canada’s commitment the principle that a person’s access to timely and adequate healthcare must not depend on the amount of money in their pocket, Canadians increasingly struggle with the high costs of necessary medications. [More than one in five](#) adults in Canada do not have drug coverage adequate to ensure access to medications that they need.

Bill C-64 reflects a step-by-step process recommended by [experts](#) in 2019 to bring Canada into line with most other wealthy countries that provide universal coverage of necessary medicines as part of their Medicare system.

Incremental expansion of coverage from contraceptive and diabetes medication toward a full public, universal pharmacare system will require the buying power of a single-payer system purchasing medications for 40 million Canadians through processes that are evidence-based and publicly accountable. In addition to lowering costs for medications, this should streamline system complexity and administrative costs.

“We start by insisting that access to pharmacare does not vary from one person to the next,” said Senate sponsor of Bill C-64, Kim Pate. “Pharmacare must remedy Canada’s patchwork of

literally thousands of independent private and public drug plans. It must be a cohesive system that brings together and ensures Canada's purchasing power when negotiating prices and supply guarantees with multinational pharmaceutical companies. It must support individual households and employers by relieving them of the costs of drug coverage."

- 30 -

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