



Children's
Healthcare
Canada

Santé
des enfants
Canada

PHARMACARE

March 15, 2024

OVERVIEW

On February 29, 2024, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-64, *An Act respecting pharmacare* which advances the priorities for the implementation of a national universal pharmacare program in Canada. This framework establishes the core principles for the initial stage of a national universal pharmacare program which includes coverage for diabetes medication and contraception. This legislation is a promising step towards securing

universal access to essential medications for all Canadians but more work is needed to ensure the distinct pharmaceutical needs of children and adolescents are prioritized through the addition of coverage for pediatric-specific pharmaceutical medications and devices within this program.



OUR TAKE

The Pharmacare legislation outlines the intention of the federal government to collaborate with provinces and territories (PTs) with a commitment to provide universal, single-payer coverage for certain contraception and diabetes medications. Given the escalating global incidence of diabetes among children, and the prevalence of roughly 30,000 school-aged children living with type 1 diabetes in Canada, it is encouraging to see the federal government's commitment to meaningfully address the growing needs of individuals living with diabetes by providing them with diabetes medication free of charge through this program. The current legislation recommends coverage of common diabetic therapies including insulin, metformin and combination formulations such as Sulfonylureas, and SGLT-2 inhibitors. Separate from the current legislation, the federal government has announced its intention to establish a fund to support access to diabetes devices and supplies. While all jurisdictions provide a level of coverage for diabetic supplies and devices, there remains inconsistency nationally in terms of the support provided and eligibility. Further details are needed to clarify the impact of the fund and legislation on children and youth in Canada.

We are pleased to note that Bill-64 incorporates the development of a national formulary and a national bulk purchasing strategy led by the Canadian Drug Agency. This formulary must consist of a defined list of pharmaceutical medications designed for use in pediatrics. The program has also committed to providing improved access to contraceptives for Canadians of reproductive age. These include, oral contraceptives, copper and hormonal IUDs, injections, implants, rings and morning-after pills.

While universal access to contraception and diabetes medication will contribute to significantly improving the health outcomes of Canadians the current coverage is insufficient and the program must cover a comprehensive range of essential medications including a focus on improving the

health outcomes of children and adolescents across the country. We urgently need an actionable commitment within the pharmacare plan that aims to effectively address the coverage of medications for pediatric patients.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO RIGHT-SIZE PHARMACARE FOR KIDS:

- Create a national formulary inclusive of a specified list of pharmaceutical medications intended for pediatric use to ensure consistency across Canada.
- Ensure that children and youth are included as a priority group within the scale-up and implementation of the national Pharmacare program, including the access fund for medical devices and supplies.
- Leverage the expertise of pediatric specialists in the advisory process through involvement on the expert advisory committee to formulate recommendations tailored to meet the unique needs of children and youth.
- Expedite regulatory pathways to facilitate the advancement of commercially viable pediatric pharmaceutical formulations for commercial distribution.
- Establish a dedicated pediatric track within the regulatory framework for drug and device approval and incorporate specialized fee structures for submissions focused on pediatric healthcare needs.