



April 21, 2020

Dear Premier Ford, Deputy Premier Elliott and Minister Cho,

SEEKING IMMEDIATE GOVT RELIEF FOR ONTARIO SENIORS ON PRESCRIPTION COPAYMENTS

On March 25, 2020, the Ontario government introduced a recommendation to limit prescriptions to 30 days' supply. Given the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario's seniors and pharmacy professionals recognize and support this policy as a proactive step to safeguard our precious drug supply. Seniors, and indeed all Ontarians, rely on these medicines to keep them healthy and to maintain a positive quality of life, and they support your efforts to ensure that continuity of care is protected.

At the same time came the recommendation from the Chief Medical Officer of Health that the immunocompromised, other vulnerable individuals, and those over 70 years of age remain at home. In the context of the 30-day dispensing policy, this poses a big problem for seniors in terms of increased frequency of dispensing and, therefore, increased visits to pharmacies. CARP and the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) are thankful that Ontario pharmacies have already stepped up to the plate and, in most cases, have offered increased delivery options to allow seniors to remain in the safety of their own homes. But despite this, seniors now face unintended yet highly impactful increases in out-of-pocket expenses that are fully attributed to copayments related to prescriptions. Most seniors live day-by-day on very fixed incomes, and with many taking 10 or more medications. The sum of all these copayments for 30-day supplies is unsustainable.

CARP's members and its network of chapters have also echoed these concerns, asking CARP's national head office to take action. CARP does not believe that Ontario's seniors should be made to bear the increased costs that these new regulations, however temporary, now impose. CARP is also sensitive to the increased costs of supports offered by pharmacy professionals in the community, incurred to deliver medications to seniors, install protective barriers in their pharmacies and procure their own personal protective equipment. Not only does CARP, as Canada's largest advocacy association for older Canadians, support its members through advocacy for better healthcare and financial security, so too do we support our frontline healthcare professionals on whom we rely to help us get and stay healthy. And given that Ontario's pharmacists are our most accessible community-based providers, we are particularly sensitive to their issues during these very difficult times. We are thankful that they have remained open for business to support us during COVID-19.

Given that the 30-day dispensing policy is intended to protect our supply chain, it is wrong for the costs to protect our drug supply to fall to Ontario's seniors or the pharmacy profession. Accordingly, CARP's over 200,000 Ontario seniors along with the province's 20,000+ pharmacy professionals are asking for immediate and full coverage of all ODB copayments by the Ontario government. Collectively, we need this relief and support of the government.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. CARP and OPA and their respective members truly appreciate the hard work of your government on battling COVID-19 and protecting Ontarians. We simply request that part of your support be made toward our seniors and our frontline pharmacy professionals.

Yours sincerely,



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Ontario Pharmacists Association



Marissa Lennox
Chief Policy Officer
Canadian Association for Retired Persons

About the Canadian Association for Retired Persons

CARP (Canadian Association for Retired Persons) is Canada's largest advocacy association for older Canadians. Today CARP has more than 320,000 members. As a non-partisan association, CARP is committed to working with all parties in government to advocate for older Canadians. Its mission is to advocate for better healthcare, financial security, and freedom from ageism. CARP members engage in polls and petitions, email their elected representatives, connect with local chapters and share stories and opinions on urgent issues.

About the Ontario Pharmacists Association

The Ontario Pharmacists Association represents pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy students within Ontario communities, hospitals, primary care, long-term care, academia and industry, and collectively, these professionals number more than 20,000. Ontario patients trust their pharmacists without reservation and rely heavily on their support and guidance as their most accessible healthcare provider in the community.