



---

## Open Letter to Canada's Premiers on a Canadian Pharmaceutical Strategy

July 21, 2006

The Honourable Danny Williams, MHA  
Chair, Council of the Federation  
c/o The Office of the Premier  
Confederation Building, East Block  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Premier Williams:

We are writing to you in your capacity as the chair of the Council of the Federation and with the knowledge that when Premiers meet in St. John's next week you will be reviewing pharmaceutical issues and strategies. Our Coalition for a Canadian Pharmaceutical Strategy believes we can make important contributions to the development of any pharmaceutical strategy, whether national or provincial, based on our extensive knowledge and experience of the benefits and use of pharmaceuticals in health care.

The Coalition brings together five organizations with members across the country representing patients, health professionals, health system managers and trustees: the Best Medicines Coalition, Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Pharmacists Association and Canadian Healthcare Association. Collectively we have developed a *Framework for a Canadian Pharmaceutical Strategy* that outlines the parameters we consider essential to any pharmaceutical policy or strategy developed in Canada.

As the role of prescription drugs in health care has increased over the years, government expenditures on pharmaceuticals have also risen. Despite this fact, millions of Canadians have inadequate protection from high drug costs, and may be unable to access the medications they need. To address this problem, it is essential that governments develop a coherent, holistic strategy to ensure that all Canadians have access to safe and effective prescription drugs.

We believe that all Canadians must have timely access to safe, effective and affordable prescription drugs regardless of employment status or geography. We ask the Council of the Federation to consider the following key principles that should frame any pharmaceutical strategy:

- Canadians, no matter where they live, have equitable access to prescription drug coverage.
  - Decisions are patient-centered, taking account of the unique needs and therapeutic outcomes of individual patients and respecting the relationship between patients and their health care providers.
-

- All policy decisions, including drug approvals and program coverage, are based on an impartial review of the best available scientific evidence and on the adoption of best practices nationally and internationally.
- All initiatives are carefully assessed in accordance with a comprehensive evaluation strategy.
- Pharmaceuticals are evaluated, not in isolation, but as an integral part of the health system. They are assessed in the context of the overall burden of illness, and of their impact on direct and indirect illness costs and health system sustainability.
- Health care providers and health organizations have access to the knowledge and information necessary to facilitate optimal and appropriate pharmacotherapy.
- Appropriate use is made of the knowledge and skills of physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health care providers.
- The decision-making process is open, transparent and accountable, and incorporates the active, meaningful participation of health professionals, patients and other relevant stakeholders including public and private insurers.

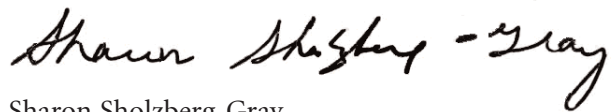
Our country urgently needs a strong pharmaceutical strategy to ensure that Canadians have access to safe, effective prescription drugs as an integral part of an efficient health system. Building this strategy will require early, ongoing and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders, including health care providers and consumers. The Coalition would like to work with governments and all other stakeholders to achieve this goal.

We wish you and your colleagues well for a successful meeting in St. John's and look forward to seeing progress and meaningful consultation towards a Canadian Pharmaceutical Strategy for the benefit of all Canadians in the very near future.

Yours truly,



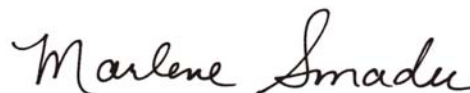
Louise Binder  
Chair, Best Medicines Coalition


Sharon Sholzberg-Gray  
President and CEO, Canadian Healthcare Association




Ruth Collins-Nakai  
President, Canadian Medical Association

Marlene Smadu  
President, Canadian Nurses Association

Brian Stowe  
President, Canadian Pharmacists Association

