

**2024.02 National Universal Pharmacare Program to Include Coverage for Drugs Prescribed for Mental Illness**

**Resolved,** that national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in 104<sup>th</sup> national annual meeting of members assembled, urges the federal government, in the implementation of a national universal pharmacare program, to include coverage for drugs prescribed for mental illness.

**Brief: National Universal Pharmacare Program to Include Coverage for Drugs Prescribed for Mental Illness**

“In any given year, [one in five] people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness. By age 40, about 50% of the population will have or have had a mental illness” (Canadian Mental Health “Fast”). Bill C-64 *Pharmacare Act* introduced the first phase of a national universal pharmacare program for Canada (Health Canada “Ensuring”). It is important that the federal government, as it prepares the program, includes coverage for drugs prescribed for mental illness.

Mental illness does not discriminate (Health Canada “Provincial”; Centre). The Canadian Mental Health Association reports “...people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures” can be affected. As well, disparities such as those created through “... racism, poverty, homelessness, discrimination, colonial and gender-based violence, among others, can worsen mental health and symptoms of mental illness, especially if mental health supports are difficult to access” (Canadian Mental Health “Fast”).

Individuals do not always have access to medications. “Approximately 5.5% of Canadians report that they skip, stretch, or do not take their medications because they cannot afford them, and they are also most likely to forgo psychiatric medications over other drugs” (Canadian Mental Health 10).

Not all Canadians have drug coverage and must pay the full cost of prescription drugs outside of hospital (Health Canada Prescription). Financial barriers should not be an impediment to accessing safe and effective prescription drugs and related products (Health Canada Ensuring). The Catholic Women’s League of Canada urges the federal government to include coverage for drugs prescribed for mental illness in a national universal pharmacare program.

## **National Universal Pharmacare Program to Include Coverage for Drugs Prescribed for Mental Illness**

### **Works Cited**

- Canadian Mental Health Association. "Mental Health in the Balance: Ending the Health Care Disparity in Canada." 2018, [www.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CMHA-Parity-Paper-Full-Report-EN.pdf](http://www.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CMHA-Parity-Paper-Full-Report-EN.pdf).
- Canadian Mental Health Association. "Fast Facts about Mental Health and Mental Illness." 19 July 2021, [www.cmha.ca/brochure/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/](http://www.cmha.ca/brochure/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/).
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. "Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics." *CAMH*, [www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics](http://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics). Accessed 4 May 2024.
- Health Canada. "Ensuring Accessible and Affordable Quality Medicines for Canadians." *Canada.gc.ca*, 24 May 2024, [www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/news/2024/05/ensuring-accessible-and-affordable-quality-medicines-for-canadians-pharmacare-legislation-includes-universal-access-to-contraception-and-diabetes-m.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/news/2024/05/ensuring-accessible-and-affordable-quality-medicines-for-canadians-pharmacare-legislation-includes-universal-access-to-contraception-and-diabetes-m.html).
- Health Canada. "Prescription Drug Insurance Coverage." *Canada.gc.ca*, May 2004, [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/pharmaceuticals/access-insurance-coverage-prescription-medicines.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/pharmaceuticals/access-insurance-coverage-prescription-medicines.html).
- Health Canada. "Provincial and Territorial Public Drug Benefit Programs." *Canada.ca*, 2017, [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/pharmaceuticals/access-insurance-coverage-prescription-medicines/provincial-territorial-public-drug-benefit-programs.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/pharmaceuticals/access-insurance-coverage-prescription-medicines/provincial-territorial-public-drug-benefit-programs.html).

**Action Plan: National Universal Pharmacare Program to Include Coverage for Drugs Prescribed for Mental Illness**

1. Raise awareness on the topic by inviting speakers, offering informative videos, holding workshops and providing resources to members, parishioners and the community at large.
2. Write letters to the prime minister and minister of health with copies to local members of parliament, encouraging them to support this resolution.
3. Monitor the federal government's response to this issue.