

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

NATIONAL PHARMACARE

August 20, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In June, the National Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare released its final report, containing the recommendation that the Government of Canada work in partnership with provincial and territorial governments to establish universal, single-payer, public prescription drug coverage for all Canadians. As the only nation in the world with a public healthcare system that does not include prescription medicine coverage, this improvement is long overdue.

A universal national system would extend coverage to include the estimated one in five uninsured or underinsured Canadians who cannot afford prescription medicines. The report says Canadian families would save an average of \$350 per year and businesses would get relief from the increasing costs of employee drug coverage, a \$750 saving per employee per year.

This work is recommended to begin with the establishment of a Canadian drug agency, which would be responsible for developing a national list of prescription drugs. First would be a list or "formulary" of essential medicines by January 1, 2022, and a full formulary developed by January 1, 2027. Ultimately, all Canadians would have access to the same range of medications. A parallel program with dedicated funds is proposed for the more expensive rare-disease medications. Through the new drug agency, it is proposed that the approval process for drugs be streamlined so that Canadians can get faster access to new, innovative drugs.

The advisory council's report also makes the case for a single-payer public system that would provide total savings up to \$5 billion per year for governments, businesses, and individuals, through pharmacare's stronger negotiating power and lower administration costs. The council recommends that Canadians and employers continue to be able to purchase supplementary private insurance.

Our government has been, as I understand, a full participant in the deliberations leading up to that report. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services on the status of our involvement and next steps in this process. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.