

## **MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE**

### **NATIONAL PHARMACARE**

**February 23, 2021**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Tomorrow, years of advocacy, consultation, and study will culminate in a vote in the federal Parliament on creation of a national pharmacare program. Bill C-213 is a rare private Member's bill that actually makes it to the floor. The Canada Pharmacare Act is based on the recommendations of the Hoskins Advisory Council and modelled on the Canada Health Act. Like our national medicare program, the Canada Pharmacare Act specifies the conditions that provincial and territorial prescription drug insurance programs must meet to receive federal funding. This includes tying federal funding to the core principles of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility.

The legislation doesn't prescribe a specific fiscal arrangement but enables the federal government to negotiate with the provinces and territories. The federal Cabinet could reduce or withhold contributions to provinces or territories if they don't respect the conditions of funding. The federal health Minister is also empowered to create an independent drug agency in collaboration with provinces and territories.

Canada is the only country in the world with a public healthcare system that does not include prescription medicine coverage. The Parliamentary Budget Office has estimated that a national pharmacare program would reduce drug costs by about 25 percent annually or \$4 billion. A universal national pharmacare system would cover an estimated 20 percent of Canadians who don't take their prescriptions now because they can't afford the costs. Canadian families will save an average of \$350 per year and businesses will get relief from the increasing costs of employee drug coverage, a \$750 savings per employee per year.

A national pharmacare program will save the NWT money, too, and improve health outcomes. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Health and Social Services about whether our government supports Bill C-213 and what other action is being undertaken to pursue a national pharmacare program. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.