

Dec 8 2023

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON, M7A 2J3



Dear Minister Jones,

We are writing to you on behalf of ImPACT Ontario Primary Care Team Pharmacists, which represents over 300 pharmacists working in team-based care. We ask that you take urgent action to address the pay disparity facing these pharmacists. Specifically, we ask that you fund primary care pharmacist wages to match that of Ministry-funded hospital pharmacists who are making upwards of 30% more.

Primary care is the foundation of a well-functioning health care system, but is currently in crisis:

- **Wait times** have been exacerbated by a shortage of family physicians, driving patients to inappropriate and expensive ER visits. Interprofessional primary care teams are an important part of the solution; yet fewer than 25% of Ontarians currently have access to one.
- **Vulnerable populations** are not receiving the integrated and coordinated care they need, resulting in suboptimal care.
- Ontario faces the “**grey wave**” of an aging population with an ever-increasing chronic disease burden.
- The pandemic has unveiled a **mental health crisis**, which is largely managed in primary care.

ImPACT applauds your government’s plan to expand access to team-based care with the investment of \$30 million. However, we also note that bolstering health human resources (HHR) is critical to ensure a stable primary care workforce:

- Only half of Ontario Family Health Teams (FHTs) have hired a pharmacist in some capacity. Providing greater access to team-based primary care – in particular pharmacists – is important as it helps keep patients out of hospitals and can reduce health care costs.
- ImPACT acknowledges that **the wage disparity between hospital and primary care pharmacists is a significant HHR barrier to recruitment and retention in primary care**, resulting in vacancies that negatively impact patient care.

The primary care pharmacist is an integral part of the Patient’s Medical Home. Since the inception of team-based care in Ontario, primary care pharmacists have been involved in optimizing the safety and efficacy of medications through collaboration with other health care professionals and patients. More recently, team-based pharmacists have stepped up with added responsibility and expanded scope. Primary care pharmacists welcome the opportunity to fully utilize their extensive education and expertise to benefit patients, but unfortunately this **expanding scope of practice has not been accompanied by an increase in remuneration** to align with these added responsibilities.

A comparison of the current maximum Ministry-funded salaries for primary care pharmacists and hospital pharmacists is summarized in the table below. Given the value that primary care pharmacists add to patient care in Ontario, *we are asking that this 30% wage discrepancy be eliminated immediately and that retroactive wage increases be provided in line with hospitals.*

Site of Practice	Maximum Annual Salary	Maximum Hourly Wage
Primary Care Pharmacists	\$97,292	\$49.89
Hospital Pharmacists	\$122,850+	\$63+
Disparity in Wage	up to 30%	

The Ontario Community Health Compensation Market Salary Review completed in November 2023 by Eckler Ltd. as commissioned by the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) also highlighted a discrepancy in pharmacists' pay. However, this report was based on outdated 2022 salary information and does not reflect recent retroactive and prospective wage increases (see OPSEU award [press release](#)).

The following is a sample of what primary care pharmacists do to improve patient care every day:

- **Free up time** for primary care providers (e.g., family physician, nurse practitioner)
- Supporting **mental health** care through medication optimization
- Providing **expanded scope** services (e.g., COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts, Paxlovid assessments, prescription renewals and adaptations, and minor ailments assessments)
- Improve **patient safety** and health outcomes in **vulnerable, socially isolated and high-resource** populations

Given the positive impact that primary care pharmacists have on patient care and the important role we play in collaborative health care teams, we ask that you eliminate this wage disparity between primary care pharmacists and hospital pharmacists. **Specifically, we ask that you fund primary care pharmacist wages to match that of Ministry-funded hospital pharmacists who are making upwards of 30% more depending on the hospital site.**

We appreciate your attention to this matter. If you would like to discuss our request in greater detail, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your team to discuss these issues further. We can be reached at impactpharmacists@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

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