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Canadian Council on
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END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA



Council of Canadians
with Disabilities
A VOICE OF OUR OWN

Conseil des Canadiens
avec déficiences
CETTE VOIX QUI EST LA NOTRE

Media Release

September 15, 2010

Pharmacare central to preventing and eradicating poverty and the Premiers are acting on it

Toronto – A universal pharmacare plan would help prevent poverty and reduce the burden of drug costs for the 1 in every 4 Canadians without drug coverage, anti-poverty groups advise. The 9 per cent of Canadians who live in poverty are at higher risk of poor health, chronic illness and injury. The new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives confirms that in the current jumbled mix of private and public drug plans access to prescription drugs is largely based on income and where you live or work, rather than individual need.

“It is unacceptable that in one of the richest countries of the world, people don’t fill their prescriptions because they don’t have enough money. Over past year, 8% of Canadians told Statistics Canada that they could not afford to buy the drugs that their physician prescribed. Can we imagine what that means to children, people with disabilities, and those with chronic conditions such as diabetes and asthma? Surely, Canada can do better!” commented Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator of Campaign 2000.

“What is the use of having a public medicare program if a key element is excluded? What is the virtue of a publicly-funded doctor visit if the patient is too poor to fill the prescription? Across Canada, too many people lack drug coverage. On many provincial social assistance programs, coverage is too narrow. The working poor and self-employed usually do not have work-based plans and are ineligible for provincial income-tested programs,” said Sid Frankel of Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

“Sadly some people with disabilities are forced to remain on social assistance where their drugs costs are covered. A universal pharmacare program would remove that barrier to employment and provide comparable access to prescription drugs for all Canadians” said Laurie Beachell, National Coordinator of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

“We are encouraged that the Premiers agreed to work together to address the critical issue of drug costs at their August meeting in Winnipeg. At our community roundtable on eradicating poverty in Canada a broad range of Aboriginal and civil society organizations endorsed the need for a universal pharmacare plan. We urge the Premiers and the federal government to follow through,” said Peggy Taillon of Canadian Council on Social Development.

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