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National Pharmaceuticals Strategy
Ministry of Health

**PROGRESS REPORT OUTLINES NEXT STEPS
TO IMPROVE PRESCRIPTION DRUG ACCESS AND COST**

TORONTO – Provincial and territorial governments today released the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy Progress Report to the public. The report provides recommendations to implement a multi-year strategy to improve access to drug therapies, help ensure the affordability of prescription drugs and work towards sustainability of the public health care system.

“Prescription drugs are the second-largest and fastest-growing category of health-care expenditure in Canada,” said B.C. Health Minister George Abbott, co-chair of the Ministerial Task Force. “As such, an effective national pharmaceuticals strategy will benefit all Canadians. Every Canadian should be confident they have access to safe, effective and affordable drug therapies today and into the future.”

In September 2004, Canada’s First Ministers asked Health Ministers to establish a Ministerial Task Force to develop a National Pharmaceuticals Strategy as part of the 2004 Health Accord. Provincial and territorial Ministers of Health accepted the Progress Report on July 5, 2006. It was presented to the Council of the Federation on July 28, 2006.

“The Progress Report demonstrates the commitment of Canada’s new government to working with provinces and territories to explore solutions,” said Federal Health Minister Tony Clement, co-chair of the Ministerial Task Force. “The work to date is an important step towards helping us get things done for Canadian families and taxpayers within the context of our respective roles and responsibilities for pharmaceuticals. I look forward to continuing my discussions with my provincial and territorial colleagues.”

Both ministers stated that federal, provincial and territorial governments have shown an unprecedented level of cooperation and agreement in developing background research and writing the report.

The Progress Report addresses challenges and opportunities in five priority areas:

- **Catastrophic drug coverage** – the task force will proceed with detailed analysis on two potential coverage policies to help protect Canadians from financial hardship in gaining access to required drug therapies.
- **Expensive drugs for rare diseases** – the task force will develop a framework – based on on-going findings of a cost-shared research study of Fabry patients – to provide equitable access to proven drug therapies for rare diseases.
- **Common national formulary** – the task force will work with the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology in Health to expand the Common Drug Review to include existing drugs that have new uses. A common review of oncology drugs will also be examined.

- **Drug pricing and purchasing strategies** – the task force will pursue a non-regulated approach at the national level to achieve better drug pricing for all jurisdictions in Canada, with a focus on non-patented drugs.
- **Real world drug safety and effectiveness** – the task force will move forward to establish a pharmaceutical research network which will target its initial work on evaluating the safety and effectiveness of newer drugs already on the market to treat diabetes, Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease.

The next phase of the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy will see further opportunities for stakeholder engagement, as well as ongoing dialogue among governments. Appropriate and targeted consultation with stakeholders will be a critical success factor in the further development and successful implementation of the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy.

It is understood that Quebec will maintain its own pharmacare program and is not part of the development of the strategy.

The full National Pharmaceuticals Strategy Progress Report is available online at www.nps-snpp.ca.

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