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Free Prescription Medications for Everyone Under 25

Ontario Becomes First Province to Cover Prescriptions for Children and Youth

Prescription medications are now free for everyone under the age of 25 in Ontario. As of January 1, the province has made the biggest expansion to medicare in Ontario in a generation, providing drug coverage to over four million children and youth across the province. The launch of OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare is a national milestone as Ontario becomes the first province to provide prescription drug coverage to children and youth.

Premier Kathleen Wynne was in downtown Toronto to celebrate this national milestone with some of the young people and parents who now have access to over 4,400 medicines, completely free of charge. Some of the now pub-

licly funded prescriptions include depression and anxiety medications, insulin and diabetic test strips, antibiotics, asthma inhalers and birth control pills.

This expansion of medicare marks a turning point for Ontario families, who now have access to life-saving drugs without having to worry about affordability. Coverage will be automatic for children and youth with an OHIP card and a valid prescription. There will be no upfront costs, no co-pays and no strings attached.

The launch of OHIP+ is just one of the historic ways Ontario has changed with the new year. The government's plan to build a fairer, better province also includes a raise to the minimum wage to \$14 an hour, effective January 1. The minimum wage will further increase to \$15 per hour

as of January 1, 2019.

Ontario's plan is creating fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

QUICK FACTS

Ontario is the first province to provide prescription medication coverage at no cost for all children and youth under 25 who are OHIP-insured.

An estimated 1.2 million people in Ontario without drug coverage will benefit from OHIP+. This is according to a recent report by the Conference Board of Canada that estimates a drop from 13.2 per cent to four per cent

in the number of people not currently eligible for drug coverage under a public or private insurance plan in Ontario.

OHIP+ covers prescription medications listed on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary and additional medications eligible for funding through the Exceptional Access Program and prescribed by a doctor or nurse practitioner.

Ontario's public drug programs already help to pay for needed prescription medications for seniors, people with high drug costs and other vulnerable populations. It marks one of the many ways the Ontario government is leading a national discussion on the future shape of pharmacare in Canada.

Increasing the minimum wage is part of the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017, which responds to the

final report of the Changing Workplaces Review. The report estimated that more than 30 per cent of Ontario workers were in precarious work in 2014. Today part-time work represents nearly 20 per cent of total employment.

Since the global recession, more than 800,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. By 2020, Ontario is expected to create over 200,000 more net new jobs. The unemployment rate in Ontario is currently at a 17-year low.

"On January 1, people across Ontario woke up to a new year and a new province — one that is fairer and better for children and their families. When your child is sick, you press pause on life. I want every parent to know that, whatever health challenges may arise, finding the money for much-needed prescription drugs is one less thing for you

to worry about — and an important way that we are fighting for fairness so that we all share in Ontario's economic success."

— Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

"Cost should never be a barrier that prevents our young people from receiving the health care they need. We are protecting the health and lives of all children and youth in Ontario, 24 years of age and younger, by providing easy access to prescription medication at no cost that will also lift the financial burden off parents who are without coverage. We will not give up on our vision of a universal pharmacare system, so that one day all Ontarians will have access to free drug coverage to keep them healthy and strong."

— Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

CANADIANS MORE WORRIED THAN EVER ABOUT TEXTING AND DRIVING

A Canadian Automobile Association poll finds an overwhelming majority of Canadians think texting and driving is getting worse, despite moves by law enforcement to crack down and extensive public education efforts. More than four out of five Canadians (83%) believe texting while driving is a bigger problem today than it was three years ago.

"Despite anti-texting and driving laws in all provinces across the country and several years of public education campaigns, Canadians still don't seem to be getting the message," says Jeff Walker, Chief Strategy Officer, CAA National.

Texting and driving is tied with drunk driving as the #1 road safety concern among Canadians, according to CAA's poll. A whopping 96% say that drivers who text and drive are a threat to their personal safety on the road. CAA has been tracking what worries Canadians when it comes to road safety for several years. Texting while driving broke into the top 10 list of concerns in 2011. Almost seven years later, Canadians' view on the danger of texting and driving continue to get worse.

"Studies show drivers are as much as 23 times more likely to get into a collision when they text and drive," says Walker. "It's important we all put our devices down and stay focused on the road."

Canadians also believe other forms of distraction are increasingly an issue, such as emailing while driving, drivers talking on cell phones and drivers talking to/engaging with their in-car technologies.

Findings are based on a CAA poll of 2,003 Canadians carried out in November. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of +/-2.19%, 19 times out of 20.

About CAA

CAA is a federation of eight Clubs providing over six million Members with exceptional emergency roadside service, complete automotive and travel services, member savings and comprehensive insurance services. CAA also advocates on issues of concern to its members, including road safety, the environment, mobility, infrastructure and consumer protection.

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