

National Oral Health Month: The importance maintaining your teeth

Written by David Tilson

There has been much discussion about Pharmacare lately, both at the provincial and federal levels. Provincially, we saw the Province of Ontario create an OHIP+ Pharmacare program to provide free prescription drugs to people 24 years old or younger. We then heard the Premier announce the program will be expanded to seniors ? an announcement conveniently timed before the June 7th provincial election. Most recently, the Standing Committee on Health presented its report entitled ?Pharmacare Now:

Prescription Medicine Coverage for all Canadians? in the House of Commons. While the report and the work performed by the committee aimed to ensure Canadians have access to the medications they need, there are still important, unanswered questions and concerns which need to be addressed.

The long-anticipated report, presented in the House of Commons on April 18, 2018, is the result of two years of work by the Standing Committee on Health which received testimony from 99 witnesses, made 18 recommendations. These recommendations include expanding the Canada Health Act to include prescription drugs dispensed outside hospitals to cost-sharing between federal, provincial, and territorial governments for the program. While the report is extensive, it leaves unanswered questions, as raised by my colleague and Vice-Chair of the Health Committee, Marilyn Gladu.

Given the significance of the unanswered questions the report did not answer, we, the Conservative Official Opposition, have therefore presented our own Supplementary Opinion to the Committee's report. We are focused on bringing forward solutions that address the health priorities of Canadians and policies that put people before government. Currently, at least 80 per cent of Canadians have prescription medication coverage either through private or public insurance plans. However, having not yet consulted with the provinces and territories, who have jurisdiction to deliver this service, this leaves unanswered questions about implementation and discrepancies in costing figures. In addition, no consultation has been done with Canadians who have private coverage, who may not want to move to a public plan that offers less coverage.

It is irresponsible to propose solutions that may cost billions and result in tax increases for hardworking Canadian families who already have coverage. Unfortunately, the out of control spending and deficits of this Liberal government will make it very difficult for any meaningful federal investments in health care or any other social programs.

The unanswered questions and concerns resulting from the report undoubtedly require further study before moving forward on an issue of this magnitude. It is important to take the time to address these questions now rather than to later discover issues that will cost Canadian taxpayers more in the long run. Furthermore, it is also important to ensure that the provinces, territories, and the many Canadians currently covered by private drug plans, have the opportunity to give their valuable input as well.