



Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association

PHYSICIANS ADVOCATING FOR HEALTH

February 29, 2024

Dear Members,

On Friday, the federal NDP and Liberals announced a deal to provide Canadians with diabetes medication and birth control. The Alberta government promptly said they would opt out before the program details are developed. We posted the two statements below on our social media.

February 27, 2024

Statement: Alberta Government Denying Albertans the Federal Birth Control Deal

On February 23 the federal NDP and Liberal parties announced they reached a deal to provide Canadians free coverage for birth control, yet the Alberta government has said they will opt out for our province. As physicians in Alberta, we were thrilled for our patients to hear the initial news and then outraged by the follow-up from the Government of Alberta. Albertans must receive the same coverage for free birth control as the rest of Canada—it is absurd to play politics with the health of our patients and deny Albertans this groundbreaking program.

Despite the Alberta government claiming the vast majority of Albertans have access to free contraception, we know that the cost and access are prohibitive:

- [16.8% of Albertan woman do not have a government, employer or association insurance plan.](#)
- The median income for [women in Alberta is \\$36,900.](#)
- [Women are struggling to buy menstrual products when their household earns less than \\$40,000 per year.](#) They are also struggling to buy birth control.
- The two Government of Alberta programs ([Alberta Adult Health Benefit](#) and [Alberta Child Health Benefit](#)) for low income prescription drugs are insufficient. They require a maximum income of \$16,580 for a single adult household to \$46,932 for a couple with four children to be eligible.
- The Alberta Health Services programs to provide free birth control are not sufficient or equitable across the province. The north zone does not provide any free birth control. The Edmonton, Calgary and central zones do not have enough supplies to meet the demand.

Access to free birth control is essential for women's reproductive health and reducing costs to the health system. Canadians are spending at least half of their reproductive lives at risk for unintended pregnancy. Nearly a [third of women will have at least one induced abortion](#) in their life. [40% of pregnancies in Canada are unintentional.](#) The average direct medical cost of [one adult unintended pregnancy is \\$2,129.](#)

Hormonal therapy and IUDs are used for medical conditions that improve quality of life; it is not only for family planning. They are used for dysmenorrhea (painful menses), endometriosis, heavy menses, atypical uterine bleeding, polycystic ovarian syndrome to prevent hirsutism, acne, endometrial hyperplasia (a precursor to endometrial cancer), iron deficiency anemia, ovarian cysts, adenomyosis, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, premenopausal menorrhagia (the five-10 years prior to menopause when menses becomes heavier), vasomotor symptoms in perimenopause and prevention of endometrial hyperplasia. It is also to prevent unnecessary surgical interventions such as hysterectomy, endometrial ablation, dilation and curettage.



February 29, 2024

Statement: Alberta Government Opting Out of the Pharmacare Deal for Diabetes Medication

The Alberta government has said they will opt out of the federal NDP and Liberal parties' announcement to provide Canadians free coverage for diabetes medication. It is inconceivable that our provincial government would refuse Albertans the same benefit as all Canadians. The Alberta government must rethink the needs of Albertans and provide them with diabetes medication health insurance coverage when the federal program is available.

The cost and access are barriers, regardless of the Alberta government claiming the vast majority of Albertans have health insurance:

- [16.8% of Albertan woman and 18.3% of men do not have a government, employer or association insurance plan.](#)
- [26% of Albertans have type 1, type 2 diagnosed, type 2 undiagnosed or prediabetes.](#)
- [The costs are:](#)
 - \$514 million directly to the health care system.
 - \$78-\$6,557 for individuals with type 1 per year.
 - \$76-\$5,641 for individuals with type 2 per year.
- People with diabetes are over three times more likely to be hospitalized with cardiovascular disease, 12 times more likely to be hospitalized with end-stage renal disease, and almost 20 times more likely to be hospitalized for a nontraumatic lower limb amputation compared to the general population.

People with diabetes can have a shorter life expectancy of five to 15 years. It can contribute to 30% of strokes, 40% of heart attacks, 50% of kidney failure and 70% of non-traumatic leg and foot amputations. It is the leading cause of blindness.

The Alberta government's naïve and premature plan to opt out of the program without even reviewing it speaks to their willingness to prioritize politics over the lives of Albertans.

Warmest regards,

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President 2024
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Mission: Physicians Advocating for Health

Vision: Engaged Physicians; Sustainable Healthcare; Health Community

Values: Advocacy; Integrity; Growth and Learning; Community Connection

To contact the EZMSA Physician Advisor: <https://albertazmsa.com/physician-advisor>