

## January 10, 2022 | Ongoing Discussions re: COVID-Vaccination Fee

**IMPORTANT! Please read in full.**

You are receiving this email as you have registered your pharmacy for the COVID-19 Vaccination Program. Pharmacy owners/pharmacists-in-charge are responsible for ensuring the following information is relayed to pharmacy staff. PANL is housing all correspondence on the PANL COVID-19 Resources page – please encourage your staff to check there regularly as well.

Prior to Christmas break, PANL requested a meeting with the Department of Health and Community services to discuss the strain on pharmacies as a result of the COVID-19 vaccination program and request an increase to the vaccination fee of \$13. We were granted this meeting on December 30 and provided the following in support of this request:

The workload and time associated with delivering COVID vaccinations is significant – pharmacies are struggling to keep up with the demand, particularly since government is now heavily relying on pharmacies to administer booster shots. Pharmacies are being bombarded with COVID service requests - there are non-stop phone calls and visits to the pharmacy from residents checking on availability of vaccines and rapid tests. Those pharmacies that can afford to do so have had to hire additional staff – pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy assistants and even nurses - to be able to continue with the vaccination program while maintaining core services such as filling prescriptions, providing OAMT, counselling and a myriad of other frontline pharmacy services.

The current \$13 fee is the same as the flu vaccination fee because the Department has always maintained there is no difference between the two programs. From the beginning of our discussions with government we advised that delivering COVID vaccinations is far more time and work intensive from delivering flu vaccinations and that the fee should be increased to reflect this. Just a few examples of how it is different include the additional time required for patient questions and counselling and as a multi-dose program, checking each patient's record's to ensure eligibility. Further, flu shot clinics do not have the same sense of urgency – the vaccinations are spread out over the course of 4-5 months, however, given the sheer number of people looking for vaccinations NOW additional staff is needed for crowd control and to ensure the pharmacy workflow is maintained. All other provincial governments recognized this from the start of the pandemic and increased remuneration for COVID vaccinations (from flu vaccinations) with many receiving further increases as the

pandemic continues. The average fee in Canada is \$18.22 and the average fee of the other Atlantic provinces is \$17.70. NL pharmacists receive a \$13 fee.

Atlantic Canada:

NB: \$17

NS: \$16

PEI: \$20

NL: \$13

We also provided the following points for consideration:

- Government is willing to pay physicians \$18 to provide the exact same service. There has been minimal participation from this vaccinator group – this unused funding should be available to fairly compensate pharmacists.
- NL is only province in Canada that does not have vaccine delivered to pharmacies. Some pharmacies are 3+ hours away from the closest depot. The time and expense related to travelling to the depot to pick up vaccine is not recovered.

Pharmacists are playing a critical role in the COVID-19 response and should be receiving appropriate compensation. We have yet to receive a response from government. We will advise members when we do.

Questions may be directed to the PANL office.

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