

Improving Vaccine Access Through Community Pharmacies

A PRACTICAL, **PATIENT-CENTRED** ROADMAP FOR ONTARIO

The Challenge

Vaccination is one of the most effective tools to protect against vaccine-preventable diseases. Yet immunization rates are declining, and many Ontarians continue to face barriers to timely access. Despite being among the most accessible healthcare providers, the role of pharmacy professionals remains limited by outdated regulatory, financial, and system constraints.

The Opportunity

Community pharmacy professionals are uniquely positioned to improve vaccine access and have demonstrated their value through large-scale influenza and COVID-19 immunization efforts.

Highly trained and
trusted healthcare
providers

91% of Ontarians
live within 5 km of a
pharmacy

Proven capacity to safely
deliver vaccines at scale

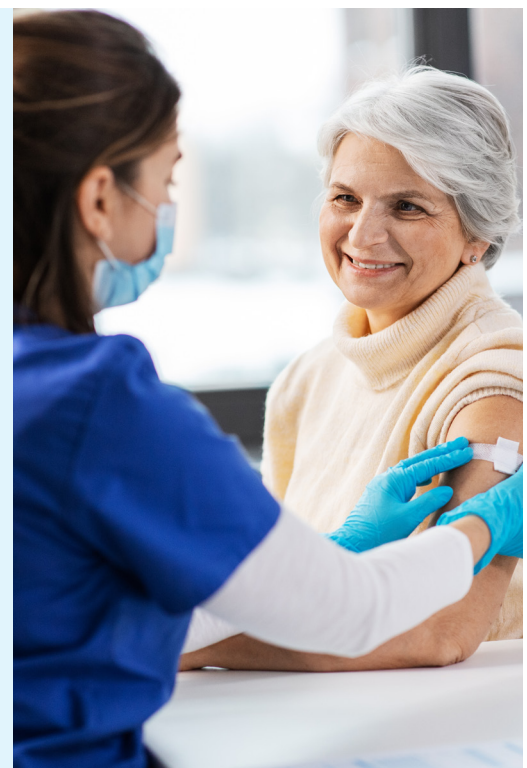
With the right policy and system supports, community pharmacies can play an even greater role in improving timely and equitable vaccine access.

The Vaccine Access Action Plan

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) launched the **Vaccine Access Action Plan (VAAP)** to identify the key challenges limiting vaccine access in Ontario and to put forward practical, evidence-informed solutions to improve access through community pharmacies.

Guided by a multi-disciplinary advisory committee including pharmacists, physicians, patient advocates and public health experts and supported by targeted research and cross-jurisdictional analysis, the VAAP delivers a coordinated set of recommendations to:

- Improve timely and equitable vaccine access
- Reduce unnecessary steps in the patient journey
- Better leverage the pharmacy workforce
- Strengthen team-based care across Ontario



Key Policy Opportunity

One recommendation identified in the Action Plan is to **expand pharmacists' scope of practice to include prescribing authority for all vaccines**.

Current Patient Pathway in Ontario

A 62-year-old patient walks into a pharmacy seeking a shingles vaccine. Despite the vaccine being available in the pharmacy, the patient cannot receive it without a prescription from a physician or nurse practitioner for insurance coverage purposes. As a result, **the patient must leave the pharmacy, wait days for an appointment (if they have a provider), obtain a prescription, then return to the pharmacy** to fill the prescription and have it administered, adding unnecessary steps to the patient journey.

Future Patient Pathway

If pharmacists were able to prescribe vaccines, the pharmacist could assess, prescribe, dispense and vaccinate the patient all in one visit – **a true one-stop experience for patients**.



Why this matters:



Makes the patient journey more seamless, **removing unnecessary steps and delays** to access treatment



Supports patients without access to a family physician or nurse practitioner



Improves **system efficiency**



Better leverages an **existing, trusted workforce**

Enabling pharmacists to prescribe vaccines in addition to their existing authority to administer them would help modernize Ontario's immunization framework and improve timely protection for Ontarians.