



November 9, 2021

Minister of Health
Health Canada
Address Locator 0900C2
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K9

Submitted via email: hccminister.ministresc@canada.ca

Dear Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos,

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies Canada ([ASOP Canada](#)) would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as the Minister of Health. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your team in delivering on your new responsibilities and priorities as Minister of Health.

ASOP Canada is a project of ASOP Global, a global non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the public safe from illegal online sellers of prescription medicines and protecting the integrity of our legitimate pharmaceutical supply chain. We have a diverse membership that includes pharmacists, pharmacies, distributors, and our observers include the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA), Healthcare Excellence Canada, GS1 Canada, among others. ASOP Canada works with local and international law enforcement, government, academics, and victim organizations to identify the threats to Canada's safe supply chain of medicines and medical products in addition to illegal online content and the appropriate tools to tackle illegal online content.

ASOP Canada has had the pleasure of working with the Government of Canada on the issues of importation, online harm, and the opioid epidemic.

We are encouraged by the Government of Canada's progress to address threats to Canada's pharmaceutical supply chain through the recently finalized regulations regarding drug shortages. The final regulations make permanent the provisions introduced in the government's Interim Order to address drug shortages in November 2020.

We believe the regulations on drug shortages are necessary to protect Canada's drug supply in response to U.S. drug importation proposals. In July, the Biden Administration issued an Executive Order that maintained a commitment from the Trump Administration to allow U.S. states to import bulk medicines from Canada. The final regulations will discourage Canadian Drug Establishment License (DEL) holders from participating in schemes that allow for the bulk exportation of medications intended for the Canadian population. We believe this is a crucial step to ensure Canadians can access the drugs they need – an issue that became even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, we applaud Health Canada's consultation regarding proposed regulations that pertain to transshipment of drugs. We remain concerned about online sellers in Canada that facilitate the sale of non-Health Canada approved medications from overseas jurisdictions to U.S. customers. The transshipment of those medicines creates a channel through which unapproved medications could enter and stay in Canada. By ensuring the specifications for the drug destined solely for export must comply with specifications for the importing country, the proposed regulations will ensure Canada provides additional oversight, while maintaining high quality standards for drugs imported into and transshipped through Canada.

While the proposed regulations will be effective in preventing the cross-border inflow and outflow of falsified, unapproved or substandard medications, Canada can further strengthen patient safety by addressing oversight gaps with respect to online pharmacies operating in Canada.

ASOP Canada's consumer data suggests that Canadians have become more open to purchasing medications online since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant minority of Canadians are willing to access medications from an unsanctioned website, if it means accessing medications not otherwise available, or available at a lower price. Such trends point to a potential increased risk to Canadians that requires greater attention by our federal and provincial regulatory authorities.

Health Canada can play an important role in facilitating dialogue with provincial officials and regulatory bodies regarding best practices in regulatory oversight, strategies to fill oversight gaps and federal-provincial-territorial alignment in information-sharing and public awareness.

Finally, we welcome the Government of Canada's activities to tackle online harm through proposed legislation and regulation; however, there is an opportunity being missed by the Government with the exclusion of illegal online sales of drugs, including opioids and counterfeit drugs, in the proposed legislation and regulatory framework.

The growth in illicit online opioid sales requires the inclusion of opioid sales in any government definition of online harm to reflect their harms to public health and security. We believe that multi-departmental government cooperation with our health sector, law enforcement and technology sector will be critical to tackling illegal online sellers of opioids and providing law enforcement and authorities the tools required to take down the criminal networks that prey upon Canadians. We have attached our recent submission to the Digital Citizen Initiative for your reference.

Please know that ASOP Canada, its members, and network of law enforcement, academia, and international partners are here for you as a resource to you and your team. We welcome an opportunity to brief your team in the coming weeks on ASOP Canada's ongoing initiatives.

Sincerely,

Dani Peters

Dani Peters
Advisor, ASOP Canada
dani.peters@buysaferx.pharmacy