



April 30, 2009

PHARMACARE CHANGES KEEP PROGRAM AFFORDABLE FOR MORE MANITOBANS: OSWALD

The province is updating Manitoba's pharmacare program to better ensure deductible changes are gradual when families have a change in income, Health Minister Theresa Oswald announced today.

"Small increases in income shouldn't mean a significant jump in a family's pharmacare deductible," Oswald said. "The changes we're making today will make Manitoba's pharmacare deductible structure more gradual and fair."

Manitoba's pharmacare deductible rate will continue to be a percentage of family income. However, more income brackets have been put in place so that any deductible increases are gradual. The province committed to update pharmacare deductibles in last month's provincial budget.

Oswald said a majority of people receiving pharmacare will see either no change or a slight decrease in their deductible this year as a result of this step and will be better protected against large deductible increases in the future. Some will see a small increase in their deductible this year of no more than five per cent.

The minister noted these changes build on previous action the province has taken to protect Manitobans from rising drug costs.

Since 1999, the province's investment in pharmacare has risen by more than 220 per cent. To address rising drug costs, the province adopted a new generic drug policy that saved more than \$7 million in drug costs in 2008-09. These savings are directly reinvested into pharmacare to expand the number of drugs covered and to keep the program affordable for Manitoba families.

The province has added more than 2,000 new drugs to the approved pharmacare list since 1999 to meet the health needs of Manitobans, the minister said. The average annual benefit paid to pharmacare recipients has more than doubled in that time, to \$2,542 last year. Pharmacare coverage has been extended to an additional 25,000 Manitoba families since 1999.

Pharmacare is a universal, comprehensive prescription drug benefit program for any Manitoban, with benefits based on family income. It covers 100 per cent of eligible drug costs once the income-based deductible is reached, regardless of age or medical condition.

More information about the Manitoba Pharmacare Program, including an online deductible estimator, is available at www.gov.mb.ca/health/pharmacare.

