

**Media Release**  
**October 24, 2023**

## Campaign Relunched to Help Reduce the Harmful Effects of Medication Misuse

Today, the Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS) launched the second year of a public awareness campaign to help address the harmful effects of medication misuse. The province-wide campaign encourages Saskatchewan residents to return all unused and expired medication to a local pharmacy. The Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$400,000 toward the program.

The first campaign, launched in October 2022, led to a 19 per cent increase in the medication returns, by weight, over its five-month span, compared to the medications returned in 2020. Between October and March of 2020, the total weight of medication returned was just over 41,000 kgs., while between October and March of 2023 the total weight of medications returned was more than 49,000 kgs.

"I am pleased with the results of the safe medication disposal campaign, and I want to thank the Pharmacy Association for partnering with us on it," Health and Addictions Minister Tim McLeod said. "We know that safely disposing of unused or expired medications can help save lives. Removing the means of drug poisoning is one of the key action items under our suicide prevention plan."

*Pillars for Life: The Saskatchewan Suicide Prevention Plan* is the provincial government's plan to address and prevent suicide. The government and its partners are building on it to improve delivery of suicide prevention programs in the province.

"Most medications, both prescription and over the counter can be dangerous if taken in the wrong dosages or if taken by someone other than the intended patient. Eliminating unused or waste medication from your homes can help to reduce the potential for harmful incidents arising from accidental or intentional medication misuse," said Michael Fougere, CEO, Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan.

Medication return programs have been found to be a safe and convenient way of removing expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from homes, thereby reducing the opportunity for others to intentionally use or accidentally take the unused medicine. In most instances pharmacies are the collection point for returned medications.

"Pharmacists are critically important members of the health care team. They play a vitally important role every day in prescribing for minor ailments in Saskatchewan residents, supporting medication therapy for patients returning home from hospital, undertaking medication reviews for patients, counselling patients on the use of medications, and much more. They have a wealth of medication expertise and are located in more than 125 communities across Saskatchewan, so they are uniquely skilled to accept and manage waste medications for safe disposal," said Fougere.

Unused medications can be provided to pharmacists in pharmacies across the province. The pharmacist will accept the medication, and place it into a special medication disposal box, which will be regularly destroyed, in a safe manner.

The public awareness campaign is working to increase the medication return rate through billboards, radio and print advertisements and posters.

The campaign will begin November 1.

**Links to:**

[Campaign billboard 1](#), [Campaign billboard 2](#)  
[Campaign poster1](#)

**For more information on the campaign contact:**

Michael Fougere, CEO  
Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan  
(306) 570-8340  
[info@skpharmacists.ca](mailto:info@skpharmacists.ca)  
[www.skpharmacists.ca](http://www.skpharmacists.ca)