ALBERTA
PRIMARY AND PREVENTATIVE HEALTH SERVICES

Office of the Minister
MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat

AR 241566

August 11, 2026

Alex McKinnon
President
MEBCO
308A Beechgrove Drive
Toronto ON M1E 4A3

Sent via email: d22thompson@gmail.com

Dear Alex McKinnon:

Thank you for your correspondence regarding Bill 11. I appreciate the opportunity to respond, and I acknowledge the concerns raised by your members, particularly regarding rising health benefit costs, plan sustainability, and impacts to coverage, including for retirees.

The Government of Alberta recognizes the important role that employer-sponsored and private benefit plans play in supporting Albertans' access to health care. We appreciate the perspectives shared and thank you for your continued engagement.

As you know, Alberta's government provides drug and supplemental benefits coverage through programs such as the Non-Group Coverage Program, Coverage for Seniors, and supports for low-income Albertans. However, the cost of this coverage continues to grow at a rate that is not sustainable for the overall health care system. In many instances, government-sponsored plans are currently the first payor, covering the majority of costs before private or employer-sponsored plans contribute. While we acknowledge the cost increase that may be experienced by some private and employer-sponsored plans, Alberta's government also has a responsibility to ensure that publicly funded programs remain sustainable for taxpayers and are available to Albertans who need them now and in the future.

Bill 11 will authorize the Government of Alberta to act as the payor of last resort for drug and supplemental benefit plans and will ensure that active employees with employer-sponsored coverage do not lose their benefits when they turn 65. Similar approaches are in place in other jurisdictions, including Ontario and New Brunswick.

As payor of last resort, government-sponsored plans will provide coverage when an individual does not have access to private coverage or has exhausted available benefits. This approach is intended to support a more balanced and sustainable distribution of drug coverage costs between public and private payors, while ensuring the responsible use of public funds.

Private and employer-sponsored plans will continue to be a foundational component of Alberta's drug coverage system. The proposed changes are intended to maintain a complementary relationship between public and private coverage, while helping to address increasing cost pressures across the system.

This change to Alberta's government sponsored health plans will take place on October 1, 2026. I am aware that MEBCO was invited to participate in the expanded working group meeting on July 22, 2026, for discussions related to the Bill 11 changes as they relate to drug programs. I hope the meeting was helpful in supporting a shared understanding of the changes and assisting with implementation planning.

Please be assured that Alberta's government-sponsored drug and health benefits programs will continue to provide support to any Albertan who requires access to drug and supplementary benefits. In the event that employee or private health insurance drug benefits are exhausted, the Coverage for Seniors Program or Non Group Coverage Program will continue to cover prescription drugs listed on the Alberta Drug Benefit List. Our government remains committed to ensuring Albertans have access to necessary drug coverage, especially when other options are not available.

Thank you again for writing and advocating for the health and well-being of Albertans.

Sincerely,

Justin Wright
Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services