

February 1, 1995

95/nr-009

**NEW PROGRAM HELPS PEOPLE
WITH EXCESSIVE DRUG EXPENSES**

TORONTO - Health Minister Ruth Grier today announced details of a new \$75 million program to provide financial help to more than 240,000 individuals and families facing unmanageable prescription drug expenses.

The Trillium Drug Program is effective April 1, 1995.

Many people with serious medical conditions must spend thousands of dollars annually for prescription drugs. People with low incomes often go without the drugs they need or depend on physicians' samples because they cannot afford to pay.

"Prescription drugs play an important part in today's health care," said Mrs. Grier. "No one should have to choose between health and financial hardship because of high expenses for prescription drugs."

The Trillium Drug Program will provide benefits each fiscal year when prescription drug costs exceed a certain proportion of income (see chart). The program does not replace private insurance plans. It will be of help to those who cannot obtain private insurance or who have exhausted their benefits.

Each year, individuals and families will:

- save their receipts for prescription drug expenses
- be eligible to apply for the Trillium Drug Program after they have paid a certain amount of the net family income for prescription drug expenses
- if approved, then be able to use their Health Cards to receive, without cost for the rest of the fiscal year, prescription drugs covered by the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program.

The minister said the Trillium program fills an important gap in the health care system.

"This program is one of the major recommendations of our drug reform process," she said. "It will mean a healthier, more secure future for a great many individuals and families - including those who struggle with Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, ALS, schizophrenia, and HIV and AIDS."

"For people who need very expensive drugs, or those who earn modest incomes, it can mean the difference between risking their health or being forced to turn to social assistance."

The Trillium program does not affect seniors or those on social assistance who already get their drugs through the ODB program. It also does not affect those people with certain specified diseases who now are covered by the Special Drugs Program.

Brochures explaining the Trillium Drug Program will be available soon in pharmacies and doctors' offices. Application kits will be available in late March through the Ministry of Health (1-800-268-1154, Toronto 314-5518, TTY 1-800-387-5559), or at pharmacies.

The kits contain detailed information on eligible expenses and a special envelope to help people save and keep track of their prescription drug expenses.

If your annual net family income is:

Each year you pay the first:

Net Income	Single	Family of Two	Family of Three	Family over Three
\$20,000 or less	500	400	350	300
25,000	725	625	575	525
30,000	950	850	800	750
40,000	1,400	1,300	1,250	1,200
50,000	1,850	1,750	1,700	1,650
60,000	2,300	2,200	2,150	2,100
70,000	2,750	2,650	2,600	2,550
80,000	3,200	3,100	3,050	3,000
90,000	3,650	3,550	3,500	3,450
100,000	4,100	4,000	3,950	3,900

Above \$20,000 the deductible is calculated on 4.5 per cent of the portion of net income over \$20,000.

For more information, please call:

Peter Gibbs, (416) 327-4363
 Communications and Information Branch