



May 8, 2010

The Honourable Deb Matthews
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Government of Ontario
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Matthews,

On behalf of the Best Medicines Coalition, I am writing to you today to express our support for your recent initiative to expand access to affordable prescription drugs in Ontario. The Best Medicines Coalition is a national alliance of organizations and individuals who share a commitment to improving the health of Canadians through the provision of safe and timely access to the best evidenced-based medicines. The membership of the BMC is comprised of some of Canada's leading health charities, representing millions of Canadians living with, or affected by, chronic disease or illness.

Reforming Ontario's drug system is a complex and challenging process and so we embraced the opportunity to participate in consultations on this initiative which began last summer. The Best Medicines Coalition has often communicated concerns about generic drug prices, which are currently among the highest in the world. The government's plans to address this and lower costs by fifty per cent are necessary and welcomed by a broad range of stakeholders, including the Best Medicines Coalition. Importantly, Ontario's public drug program must be sustainable and so savings must be re-invested into the province's drug budget to broaden access for patients in Ontario.

Likewise, we fully support reforms which will introduce accountability and transparency into the way pharmacists are compensated. Specifically, we are in agreement with Ontario's decision to not allow professional allowances to be provided to pharmacists by generic drug manufactures. It is important Ontario's limited public drug program budget is allocated and managed appropriately to maximize access so the elimination of any processes or payments which essentially inflate prices is positive. A commitment to re-investing savings is an important element of this government announcement and we look forward to hearing more details on this aspect.

As patients, the members of the Best Medicines Coalition also support the concept of pharmacists' capabilities being more fully used with fair and transparent compensation for expanded services. As models for expanding and compensating for services are

presented and reviewed, we believe it is important that patients and their representatives be involved in this discussion. Pharmacists are a vital part of health delivery across the province and so solutions must be developed so that people in Ontario will benefit from their expertise and be able to access pharmacy services when needed. Access issues in all parts of the province must be addressed so that rural and under-serviced areas not be negatively affected and any gaps in pharmacy coverage be filled.

The work thus far in reforming Ontario's public drug program is important and necessary and we congratulate you on this important step forward. The Best Medicines Coalition is available to discuss and review all aspects related to these reforms and we invite you to keep us informed on upcoming developments and to seek our input as options are reviewed.

Sincerely,

Denis Morrice
Operations Committee Member
Best Medicines Coalition

CC: Operations Committee (Linda Wilhelm, Louise Binder, Holly Vengroff, Dr. Kathy Kovacs-B urns)
Jurisdictional Access Working Group