

From: Alissa Von Bargaen [mailto:alissa@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca]
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2013 7:42 AM
To: Minister, HLTH HLTH:EX; OfficeofthePremier, Office PREM:EX
Subject: Open letter to Premier Clark and Minister Lake re: Therapeutics Initiative

Dear Premier Clark and Minister Lake,

On behalf of our board chair, Dr. Monika Dutt, please see the attached open letter from Canadian Doctors for Medicare and more than 30 health professionals and organizations calling for funding to be restored to the Therapeutics Initiative.

Best,

Alissa Von Bargaen

Alissa Von Bargaen
Project Manager
Canadian Doctors for Medicare
340 Harbord Street, Toronto, ON M6G 1H4
T: 416-351-3300 or 1-877-276-4128 (toll-free)
Fax: 416-531-7210
E: alissa@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
Twitter: @CdnDrs4Medicare



Canadian Doctors for Medicare
340 Harbord Street, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1H4
1 (877) 276-4128 / (416) 351-3300
info@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca

October 2, 2013

Open Letter to British Columbia Premier Christy Clark and the Honourable Terry Lake, Minister of Health:

We the undersigned are writing to respectfully request that your government renew your support for the British Columbia Therapeutics Initiative before it's too late.

The Therapeutics Initiative (TI) was established in 1994 as a collaboration between the BC Ministry of Health and the University of British Columbia. Before that time, the main sources of information for BC health care professionals about new drugs were marketing materials developed by the pharmaceutical companies that manufactured, and profited from, those very same drugs. Understandably, such information was not always balanced; the Therapeutics Initiative's purpose was to help provide balance.

The TI began to independently assess scientific studies and provide government and health professionals with evidence-based, unbiased information and recommendations about the effectiveness and safety of new prescription drugs. The Therapeutics Initiative has performed these tasks admirably for 19 years, gaining recognition amongst medical professionals, scientists, and respected medical institutions provincially, nationally and internationally for its fair, balanced, informative, and reliable scientific reviews and medical education efforts. The signatories on this letter are testament to that.

The TI has directly or indirectly touched the lives of every British Columbian. For example, in 2002, the Therapeutics Initiative examined the scientific evidence for rofecoxib (Vioxx), and concluded that the risk of heart attacks and other harmful effects outweighed any benefits associated with this particular painkilling medication. BC Pharmacare considered the TI's analysis and delayed publicly funding the drug, and then only funded it as a third-line drug. Two years later, Vioxx was pulled from markets around the world, linked to the deaths of approximately 60,000 people in the United States alone. It's estimated the TI's review of Vioxx and the resulting responsible decision by the provincial government saved the lives of 500 British Columbians. Early TI reviews recommended against the use of the osteoporosis drug Fosamax, now found to cause bone fractures.

As well, the TI's educational programs have helped BC doctors to rank among the best in Canada for delivering rational, evidence-based drug therapy to their patients. The TI's research, newsletters and experts have provided valuable independent perspectives on many important healthcare issues for news media and health reporters here and around the world.



Canadian Doctors for Medicare
340 Harbord Street, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1H4
1 (877) 276-4128 / (416) 351-3300
info@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca

Although the TI's work focuses on scientific evidence and not costs, it has nevertheless saved taxpayers enormous amounts of money. For example, the TI's work assisted in the establishment of British Columbia's Pharmacare Reference Drug Program, which identifies drugs that provide the same benefits as other drugs but at lower prices. Since the beginning of this program, which costs approximately \$1 million annually, British Columbia taxpayers have saved over \$1 billion and have consistently enjoyed the lowest per capita drug expenditures in Canada.

For all of these reasons, the Therapeutics Initiative should be proudly held up as a model to be strengthened in British Columbia and replicated nationally. Instead, without any official explanation to the TI, your government has suspended the TI's funding. Many of the TI's 30 contracted researchers and educators, among the best in their fields, are planning to leave for other positions—in some cases outside the province. Your government's decision to suspend funding to the TI exposes British Columbians to greater health risks and increased health care costs.

Therefore, as physicians, scientists, nurses, healthcare professionals, health educators, medical researchers, health journalists and consumers, we ask you to show your government's commitment to safe and effective drug prescribing in British Columbia, and to ensuring the health and safety of all citizens. We urge your government to restore funding to the Therapeutics Initiative immediately.

Signed,

Dr. Monika Dutt, Chair, Canadian Doctors for Medicare

Professor Donald W. Light, Rowan University (USA)

Dr. Tim Reed, Executive Director, on behalf of Health Action International, Amsterdam

David B Menkes, MD, PhD, FRANZCP, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Waikato Clinical School, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Dr. Joel Lexchin, Professor, Faculty of Health - School of Health Policy and Management, York University; Associate Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto

Leonore Tiefer, PhD, Clinical Assoc. Professor, Department of Psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, New York, NY



Canadian Doctors for Medicare
 340 Harbord Street, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1H4
 1 (877) 276-4128 / (416) 351-3300
 info@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
 www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca

Judy Norsigian, Executive Director, Our Bodies Ourselves, Cambridge, MA

Professor Arthur Schafer, Director, Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics,
 University of Manitoba

Dr. Dee Mangin, Associate Professor, Director Primary Care Research Unit, Dept of
 Public Health and General Practice University of Otago, Christchurch New Zealand

Dr. Allyson Pollock, FFPH, FRCGP, FRCP (Ed), Professor of Public Health Research
 and Policy; Co-director, Global Health, Policy & Innovation Unit: Centre for Primary Care
 and Public Health, Queen Mary, University of London

Harriet G. Rosenberg, Ph.D., Emerita, on behalf of Health and Society Program, Social
 Science Department, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University

John Bishop, Chair, Positive Living British Columbia

David Healy, MD, FRCPsych, North Wales Dept. of Psychological Medicine, Cardiff
 University, Wales UK

Dr. Michele Brill Edwards, MD, FRCPC, Department of Paediatrics, University of Ottawa,
 Clinical Pharmacology & Community Pediatrics

Janet Currie, Coordinator, Psychiatric Medication Awareness Group

Colleen Fuller, Chair, PharmaWatch Canada

Anne Rochon Ford, Executive Director, Canadian Women's Health Network

Sari Tudiver, Ph.D., Women & Health Protection (Canada)

Marc-Andre Gagnon, Assistant Professor, Public Policy and Administration, Carleton
 University, Ottawa

Nancy F. Olivieri, MD, FRCPC; Professor, Pediatrics, Medicine and Public Health
 Sciences, University of Toronto, Canada

Jill Kelly (President) on behalf of the REACH Community Health Centre, Vancouver, BC

Dr. Katie Gibbs, Executive Director of Evidence for Democracy

Jim Turk, Executive Director, Canadian Association of University Teachers



Canadian Doctors for Medicare
340 Harbord Street, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1H4
1 (877) 276-4128 / (416) 351-3300
info@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca

Michael McBane, National Coordinator, Canadian Health Coalition

Jorg Schaaber, President, International Society of Independent Drug Bulletins

Dr Juan Erviti Lopez, Director, Drug Prescribing Service, Navarre Regional Health Service, Spain; Coordinator, Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin, Navarre; Vice-president, Navarre Clinical Trials Committee

Rick Turner & Rachel Tutte, co-chairs, British Columbia Health Coalition, Vancouver

Dr. Marjorie MacDonald, President, Public Health Association of British Columbia

Bonnie Pearson, Secretary Business Manager, Hospital Employees' Union

Peter C. Gøtzsche, Professor, Director, MD, DrMedSci, MSc, Nordic Cochrane Centre, Copenhagen

Peter Doshi

Bruno Toussaint, Publishing Director, Prescrire, France

Professional Association of Residents of British Columbia

Not Responsive

From: Alissa Von Bargaen [<mailto:alissa@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca>]
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2013 7:42 AM
To: Minister, HLTH HLTH:EX; OfficeofthePremier, Office PREM:EX
Subject: Open letter to Premier Clark and Minister Lake re: Therapeutics Initiative

Dear Premier Clark and Minister Lake,

On behalf of our board chair, Dr. Monika Dutt, please see the attached open letter from Canadian Doctors for Medicare and more than 30 health professionals and organizations calling for funding to be restored to the Therapeutics Initiative.

Best,

Alissa Von Bargaen

Alissa Von Bargaen
Project Manager
Canadian Doctors for Medicare
340 Harbord Street, Toronto, ON M6G 1H4
T: 416-351-3300 or 1-877-276-4128 (toll-free)
Fax: 416-531-7210
E: alissa@canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca
Twitter: @CdnDrs4Medicare

From: President, SGP [mailto:SGP.President@bcma.bc.ca]
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2013 8:02 AM
To: OfficeofthePremier, Office PREM:EX
Subject: Therapeutics Imitative

Dear Premier Clarke

The BC College of Family Practitioners and the Society of General Practitioners are committed to the provision of the best possible quality care to the people of BC. This relies upon being able to access the best possible evidence in support of quality. We trust that you support us in these endeavors, and would ask that you consider the letter attached.

Dr Lawrence Welsh
President of the Society of General Practitioners of BC

This e-mail and any attachment(s) is for authorized use by the intended recipient(s) only. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any review, retransmission, conversion to hard copy, copying, circulation or any other use of this message and any attachments is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender immediately and delete this e-mail and any attachment(s). Thank you.



SOCIETY OF GENERAL
PRACTITIONERS OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 23, 2013

The Honourable Christy Clark
Premier of British Columbia
Box 9041
Station PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Clark,

At recent board meetings of both the Society of General Practitioners of BC and the BC College of Family Physicians, discussion about the value of the Therapeutics Initiative took place.

It is our understanding that once again funding to this organization is under threat. We feel it is very important for you to know that from our point of view the patients and doctors of BC have benefited from the Therapeutics Initiative's independent and unbiased assessments of scientific trials and its recommendations about the effectiveness and safety of prescription drugs.

As you know the Therapeutics Initiative is internationally recognized as one of the world's leading unbiased sources of evidence based information. The Society of General Practitioners of BC and the BC College of Family Physicians both believe in the ongoing importance and value to all citizens of unbiased, methodologically rigorous evaluation of drugs and ongoing funding to support this work.

As such, we ask that you consider ongoing funding to Therapeutics Initiative.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lawrence Welsh".

Lawrence Welsh
President
Society of General Practitioners of BC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shari Claremont".

Shari Claremont
President
BC College of Family Physicians

cc: The Honourable Terry Lake

Page 9 redacted for the following reason:

Not Responsive

Not Responsive

From: President, SGP [<mailto:SGP.President@bcma.bc.ca>]
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2013 8:02 AM
To: OfficeofthePremier, Office PREM:EX
Subject: Therapeutics Initiative

Dear Premier Clarke

The BC College of Family Practitioners and the Society of General Practitioners are committed to the provision of the best possible quality care to the people of BC. This relies upon being able to access the best possible evidence in support of quality. We trust that you support us in these endeavors, and would ask that you consider the letter attached.

Dr Lawrence Welsh
President of the Society of General Practitioners of BC

This e-mail and any attachment(s) is for authorized use by the intended recipient(s) only. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any review, retransmission, conversion to hard copy, copying, circulation or any other use of this message and any attachments is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender immediately and delete this e-mail and any attachment(s). Thank you.