

Media Release

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CAMPBELL GOVERNMENT FAILING BC'S PHARMACARE PROGRAM NDP calls on Health Minister to protest federal changes to patent laws

VICTORIA - New Democrat Health Critic Adrian Dix is calling on the Campbell government to stand up for B.C.'s patients and B.C.'s Pharmacare program and speak out against the federal governments plan to change drug patent laws.

"The federal government's plan to change patent laws will make it harder to get lower-cost generic drugs," said Dix, the NDP MLA for Vancouver-Kingsway. "The Campbell government needs to be clear that big pharmaceutical companies cannot have their way on this one because it will mean higher prices for patients and for the Pharmacare program."

The federal Conservatives have proposed amendments to the *Patent of Medicines (Notice of Compliance) Regulation* of the *Patent Act*. Currently in Canada, drug patents remain valid for 20 years, after which time the patents end and drugs can be produced generically, at a dramatically lower cost. The proposed changes would allow pharmaceutical firms to continue to obtain a two-year stay on generic competition while patents are adjudicated in court.

Dix said the federal government has admitted that this change will cost consumers more and greatly impact provincial drug plan budgets. "The Health Minister is facing big trouble with his Pharmacare budget which has been cut from 1.018 billion in 2007/08 to 1.016 billion in 2008/09. How is he expecting to make ends meet if these changes go through?" said Dix. "How are patients expected to make ends meet if the Campbell government is not advocating on their behalf?"

"The Campbell government has a short window to provide input on the proposed changes and make it clear that such a move is unacceptable to the people of the province and the government," said Dix. "If this battle isn't waged quickly from the provinces, it will be bad news for patients and the health care system."

"I expect the Health Minister to do his part," said Dix. "I will also be making a submission to the federal government, and encouraging other citizens to get involved in protecting consumers of prescription drugs and B.C.'s health care system."

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