

My name is Jeannie Collins Beaudin. I live in Cap-Pelé and I am a pharmacist at the Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy in the Dieppe Co-op. I have been working as a pharmacist in NB since 1977 and have enjoyed having the opportunity to help clients understand their medications, to research answers to their medication questions, to help them to choose the right non-prescription products and, often, to help them decide whether they could self-medicate or if they need to seek medical help for their health problem. Sometimes these problems have been serious ones, such as blood clots, suspected heart attack or skin infections. Other times, we were able to choose an effective treatment and a Medicare billing was avoided. Many times patients returned to thank me for the advice that made a difference in their health. None of these activities were paid for directly. Even the prescriptions that I have filled over the years were not fully covered by the professional fee that was paid by government or the clients themselves. Research has shown that the actual cost of dispensing a prescription is \$13.60 (BCPhA/CACDS study done in 2007) - substantially more than what is being paid by the NB government.

Since the amendments to the Pharmacy Act in 2008, pharmacists have also been amending incorrect prescriptions, prescribing to continue medical therapy when a doctor was not available, and prescribing non-prescription medications and supplies such as diabetes equipment - all for no additional charges in spite of the additional time required. The system of rebates being paid to pharmacies has been subsidizing pharmacist activities and prescription fees for years. Now that the NB government is proposing to eliminate this system, it is difficult to understand how we can continue to provide free services and fill prescriptions for fees lower than actual cost. It is disturbing that there has been no proposal to pay pharmacists for these previously subsidized activities and to increase professional fees, as has been done in other provinces.

Pharmacists are also now expanding their scope of activities into management of chronic disease. The NB Health Council states that 59% of New Brunswickers report taking a medication for a chronic disease, and that 47% of them could not explain what the drug was for. Studies have shown that as many as 28% of hospital admissions are directly related to a medication problem. Pharmacist medication reviews are designed to address this type of problem and to detect and correct many other medication-related problems. Government cuts to pharmacy will reduce the availability of pharmacist services that have been shown to improve outcomes and reduce expensive hospital admissions and doctor visits. Pharmacists have also provided educational services in various areas such as diabetes, smoking cessation and heart disease both on a formal and informal “on the fly” basis. Again, these activities have been subsidized by the system of rebates rather than being directly paid for by the client or by government.

Pharmacists have been proclaimed to be the most accessible health professional. In many areas of rural New Brunswick, we are often the only health professional who is present. We are one of the few health professionals, perhaps the only ones, that clients can consult without an appointment. And we are available on evenings and weekends when most health professionals' offices are closed. With the drastic reduction in funding being proposed by the NB government, it is difficult to comprehend how pharmacists can continue to provide these unpaid services and keep the hours and locations that are

currently enjoyed by New Brunswickers. It seems that we may be heading toward an American-style of health care, where each service must be billed individually, creating unnecessary administration costs that will add to the cost of providing care.

Pharmacists are interested in improving the health of New Brunswickers, offering more advanced services, and reducing costs to NB's health care system. We have ideas of how this can be accomplished, for example: trial prescriptions to reduce wastage, therapeutic substitution following an established formulary to use similar but less expensive drugs, an expanded role in immunization to increase immunization rates while freeing up physicians offices, capitation billing for nursing homes to create incentive to reduce medication use, conducting tests to monitor diabetes and warfarin therapy to reduce hospital visits and improve patient outcomes, and more. Pharmacists have rightly been described as an under-utilized resource.

Government needs to work positively with pharmacists to enhance their role in the healthcare system and to make better use of the services already being offered. Instead, our NB Pharmacists Association reports that they received no response to their proposal sent last February suggesting a fair and equitable system to reduce drug costs while reimbursing pharmacists appropriately. I would like to encourage the current government to communicate with the NB Pharmacists Association in an open and honest manner, so we can all work together toward an improved medication system in NB.

Thank you,  
Jeannie Collins Beaudin, Manager,  
Medicine Shoppe,  
615 Dieppe Blvd,  
Dieppe, NB,  
E1A 0R9  
(506)864-2670