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The Honourable Madeleine Dube
Minister of Health, Government of New Brunswick
Department of Health
PO Box 5100
Fredericton, New Brunswick
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Dear Minister,

Let me begin by saying thank you for taking the time to meet with Mr Kirk MacDonald and me to discuss the establishment of a physician practice in Keswick.

I will continue to work with the Regional Health Authority on this matter. Although I have been successful in recruiting Dr Michelle Cunningham to our location (as she is a local resident) the long term sustainability of a practice in Keswick needs to at least offer equal physician benefits as the other surrounding areas of Fredericton and it doesn't right now.

But I do truly appreciate your willing to hear our concerns.

As I eluded to in our meeting, the importance of these physician practices are two-fold for me. Certainly as an active community member, I see great value in having physicians in our community to benefit all. But I am also working to protect my business, Keswick Pharmacy.

I purchased Keswick Pharmacy in 2009 just before the cuts to pharmacy began in Ontario. Pharmacy purchase prices were based upon the historic funding models which we realize now is not a sustainable model going forward but this has left me, and several other new pharmacy owners, feeling very vulnerable with significant debt loads in this time of impending cuts.

As I am sure you are aware by now, allowances from generic manufacturers have allowed pharmacists to be able to dispense prescriptions for the NBPDP program at a loss for years now. The dispensing fee paid by our provincial gov't certainly does not cover the inventory costs, square footage costs and most importantly staff costs associated with the day to day operations of a pharmacy. With the impending drug reform, I would certainly hope that there be an acknowledgement of this fact and would hope that "fair drug pricing" include fair pharmacy reimbursement for pharmacies who dispense these medication.

At the same time, I would like you to consider the vast role that pharmacists play in our health care system in NB. As a "rurban" pharmacy (rural but still urban dependant) I have been the first contact for hundreds of patients with health care concerns and yet the province of NB does not remunerate pharmacists for this at all. Countless visits to emergency rooms by children, adults and seniors alike have been avoided because of the role pharmacist play in the community. Medication reviews have been a part of our day-to-day work since I graduated although not always formalized. I have identified countless drug interactions and responded in a manner to correct these with either the patient, prescriber or both.

On a daily basis, I extend and adapt prescriptions written by physicians. Either because they have not been written correctly or the prescriber cannot see the patient before he/she will run out of medication or they are out-and-out wrong. We as pharmacist, have not done a good job of making this evident to the public for you or them to see our value. But it is difficult to tell patients that I've had to "correct" their doctor or "cover for" their doctor since in the health care team, patient need to have confidence in their leader -the physician. To make this evident to each and every patient would most certainly undermine their confidence in their physician.

On a daily basis, I take phone calls from other health professionals asking for advice and/or information all to provide service to New Brunswickers yet we are paid nothing for this time or knowledge. I provide compliance blister packaging at no additional charge to help support seniors in their homes who are beginning to struggle. I deliver to seniors who cannot get to my store and take their blood into the hospital facility when they need me to. I properly dispose of diabetic sharps and old medications in a safe and confidential manner at my expense because I believe in patient safety. I make financial contributions to many local fundraisers and charitable organization. All this because generic trade allowances, together with third party reimbursement, provide me with enough revenue to do so. But without the funding from generic manufacturers, I can undoubtedly tell you Keswick Pharmacy would be in grave difficulty.

So let me offer these suggestions as places where I see an opportunity for the NB gov't to find health care savings both within and outside of drug pricing.

- pharmacist can take on greater roles as an immunizer
- community pharmacist could be interpreting lab work for warfarin dosing - they already do in many hospitals and prescribing accordingly.
- pharmacist can expand (with remuneration) medication reviews and education
- gov't could benefit from adding new generic medications to formulary more quickly
- gov't could benefit from reviewing hospital "auto-substitution" policies for lower priced therapeutic substitutions.
- gov't could disallow \$0.00 co-pays which creates a lack of responsibility from patients since their medication now has no value.
- gov't could disallow rewards miles to be applied to the full value of prescriptions regardless of co-pay. This encourages patients to get prescriptions whether they need them or not.
- gov't could limit the payment of meal supplements (Boost, Ensure) for low income patients who are most likely selling the product at pawn shops.
- gov't could cover newer diabetic insulin which would allow for better sugar control in

- patients and therefore improve long term health.
- implementation of the electronic health record will better allow for pharmacist to review complete prescription profiles and prevent drug interactions
 - gov't could introduce a trial prescription program specifically for medications of low tolerability - cholesterol meds, antidepressants, etc..

I guess in the end, I hope you realize that pharmacists are your partners in healthcare. We want to continue to be able to provide the same level of service to New Brunswickers and more but this is not something we can do without a fair reimbursement model from the gov't.

I was trained to be a healthcare provider, not a business person. Maybe if pharmacists were more business minded we would spend more time selling ourselves and our services to the public and we wouldn't be here right now because everyone would see our value. I appreciate that healthcare costs are spiraling out of control and need to be sustainable for all New Brunswickers but I would hope that you will see what we haven't marketed well. I would hope that you can appreciate the role I, as a pharmacist, play in the community of Keswick and I would hope that you will offer us fair and reasonable compensation to be able to continue providing services to New Brunswickers.

Respectfully,

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