

# Haliburton PharmaChoice

*Advice for Life*

220 Main St, Antigonish, NS B2G 2C2  
133 Main St, Guysborough, NS B0H 1N0

May 7, 2011

Law Amendments Committee

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing you today to express my grave concerns regarding Bill 17. I, along with my wife who is also pharmacist, operate 2 Independent pharmacies in Antigonish and Guysborough. We have been practicing pharmacy in Nova Scotia for 25 years.

I intended on presenting my concerns to the Committee in person but my scheduled Monday evening allotment conflicted with a long planned family commitment. I am concerned that my letter will not convey the anxiety I feel over the continuing ability of pharmacies to deliver essential quality services to all Nova Scotians.

I am fortunate to have had the recent opportunity to express my concerns and suggestions to both Jim Boudreau, MLA Guysborough and Maurice Smith, MLA Antigonish. I felt confident that both shared my concern over Bill 17 as it was written. I expressed the need for Bill 17 to include fair dispensing reimbursement since it eliminates a significant portion of our current store income by decreasing our generic rebates. The impact to our two stores in the first year is over \$300,000. If Bill 17 passes without amendments for billing for services, it will jeopardize our ability to continue to serve our two communities. Bill 17 does not include fair dispensing fees and essential service fees. It does not address fees for prescription adaptation, emergency prescribing, basic med reviews, therapeutic substitution or prescription renewal. It does not address a fee for the triage advice we provide on the management of minor ailments and the prescribing of medications.

We are certain that you are aware from the many pharmacists presenting over the last few days that our Pharmacies can only continue to deliver the many currently unfunded services we provide if Bill 17 includes a commitment to a comprehensive fee schedule for these services. It is unrealistic to believe that fair drug pricing can be achieved simply by affecting generic drug pricing and rebates. We are concerned with fair compensation for pharmacists providing prescriptions and medication counseling. Currently we are funded only through dispensing fees and generic rebates. We are not able to bill for the many services we provide and Bill 17 does not address this issue. Bill 17 also does not provide a realistic lead-in time for the capping of generic pricing.

Our two stores employ 3 full-time Pharmacists and 1 part-time Pharmacist, along with 6 full-time and 12 part-time technical and customer service staff. We will be forced to decrease store hours and staff hours should Bill 17 pass unchanged. We recently completed a \$250,000 prescription automation and computer upgrade to ensure our patients benefit from the latest in safety dispensing technology. This type of capital investment will not be possible in a post Bill 17 environment. Bill 17 will force pharmacies to operate in survival mode and not allow for strategic patient safety orientated investments.

It is important for you to understand the many unfunded services we provide that will be in jeopardy should Bill 17 pass as currently written. We offer free blood pressure testing and record keeping for all patients. We provide extensive diabetic meter training with disease and lifestyle counseling clinics at no charge. We provide free prescription delivery to patients and on-call emergency prescription delivery to 2 nursing homes providing care to 116 patients. We provide pharmacy services including medication reviews, staff in-services and attend all required meetings at no cost to the Homes or Province. We provide medication histories to all Nova Scotia hospitals which often include extensive consultations with hospital pharmacists, which we do not bill for. When patients are discharged, we conduct

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medication reviews and send special authorization requests to Physicians and Pharmacare without reimbursement for our time or expertise. Annually we "unofficially" act on Pharmacare's behalf to explain in detail the ever changing Pharmacare and Family Benefits drug programs to our patients. This is very time consuming but essential for the benefit of our patients with vision and comprehension challenges. We dispense medications in compliance blister-Packs for seniors and patients with complex dosing requirements to assist with medication management. This is done at no cost to ensure our many patients with vision and learning limitations receive optimal drug treatments. We have charge accounts for many seniors and welfare patients to assist when they can not pay their co pays. We hold their bills, often for months until they are able to pay from their limited budgets. This service will end if Bill 17 passes unchanged. Patients will be given our local MLA's contact information to find financial assistance in meeting the demands of their prescription co pays.

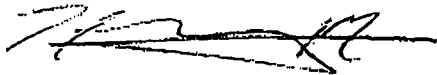
We spend thousands at both stores sponsoring community groups, sports events and local fundraisers. We sponsor school scholarships and provide practical work experience to both Pharmacy students and Nurse Practitioners. We provide a free monthly medication counseling clinic at our first nation medical centre in partnership with a local Physician.

We have always viewed Pharmacy and Government as partners in delivering cost-effective health care to Nova Scotians. You must understand that Bill 17 will cripple pharmacies financially and will not foster the cooperative environment needed to best serve our patients with a drug pricing and service fee model that will be fair to patients and Pharmacies.

There are many ideas that Pharmacists have that would provide significant savings to the cost of medication delivery. Brand drug pricing is a two tiered system offering a much lower cost to hospitals than to retail pharmacies. This should be analyzed for potential savings since Generic manufacturers are asked to provide the same drug for 35% of the cost. The timing of formulary updates for newly released generics often takes up to 3 months. The province of BC lists generics as soon as they receive federal NOC approval saving millions every month.

Senior patients who receive many prescriptions and currently exceed the annual \$382 maximum co pay will not see any savings with Bill 17. This bill will only hurt Pharmacies and Pharmacists ability to properly serve our patients. Please remember that as Pharmacists, we are caring scientists first. We each give advice to hundreds of patients daily regarding triage of symptoms, OTC advice, device training and prescription counseling. We are the first healthcare professional consulted regarding everything from rashes to stroke symptoms. Our patients trust us, listen to us and are healthier because of us. I am asking you now to listen to your Nova Scotia Pharmacists when we tell you that Bill 17 is a "big deal" to Pharmacies. Our stores can not survive a \$300,000 decrease in revenue with no ability to bill for essential services. Pharmacists are not by nature alarmists, we are practical and truthful when asked to predict what harm a condition can cause. This Bill 17 will be the most significant negative force that Nova Scotian Pharmacies have ever faced. It will mean the end of many free services that have been funded by generic rebates for the past quarter century. Please reconsider Bill 17 and add a schedule for billing for essential services and keep Patients and Pharmacies Healthy in Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,



Terry C Haliburton PhC  
Pharmacist/Owner



Joan M Haliburton PhC  
Pharmacist/Owner