

Chain pharmacy welcomes amendments to Drug System for Patients Act

TORONTO, June 7, 2006 – The proposed amendments to Bill 102, the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act, announced by the McGuinty government, demonstrate that pharmacy's concerns have been heard, says the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores (CACDS).

“CACDS acknowledges Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman and the McGuinty government for considering the input received since Bill 102 was introduced and for making changes intended to preserve the viability of pharmacy and deliver greater transparency,” says CACDS Board Chair Virginia Cirocco. “We appreciate the Minister has recognized pharmacy's concerns and responded through the proposed amendments.”

Ms. Cirocco commended pharmacy groups in Ontario and across the country for working together to provide input on the Bill. She notes that while CACDS looks forward to reviewing the final Bill in detail, the amendments address most of the major concerns with the Bill that CACDS and other pharmacy groups expressed in consultation with the government:

- CACDS called for and is pleased to see the inclusion of the Pharmacy Council and Citizen's Council in the legislation so that these important provisions would be enshrined in law.
- CACDS proposed amendments that would shift the powers of the Executive Officer and ensure a more regular, rigorous process to review the pricing and accessibility for drugs. CACDS praises the government's amendment to institute an automatic second review of decisions by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs or the Executive Officer to not list drugs and improve transparency by requiring the Executive Officer to prepare an annual report.
- CACDS asked that the government reconsider its plan to prohibit manufacturers' professional allowances. We are pleased to see that pharmacists will be permitted to receive defined “professional allowances” which are essential for the economic viability of pharmacy. We welcome the establishment of a Code of Conduct to ensure that the professional allowances are provided in a transparent manner for the benefit of patient care.
- CACDS also asked for clarification on the issue of generic drug interchangeability (generic drug substitution) and is pleased to see a commitment to the definition of “similar active ingredient”.

The plan to establish a joint working group with industry and the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, Research and Innovation, and Economic Development and Trade to promote investment in Ontario is welcome news

“CACDS had called for the government to consider a more collaborative approach to developing the legislation and the move to amend the Bill is a step in the right direction. We look forward to working actively with the Ontario Pharmacists Association and the Ontario Chain Drug Association to provide input into the development of the regulations so they reflect the realities of operating community pharmacy,” says Cirocco.

CACDS is the national association representing the chain pharmacy industry in Canada. The twenty-one members of CACDS are traditional chain drug stores, grocery chains and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. Together, CACDS members operate 5,602 stores that dispense more than 78 per cent of the nation’s prescriptions each year.

In Ontario, CACDS members operate 80 per cent of the community pharmacies in the province and employ more than 39,000 people including 4000 pharmacists.

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