



October 27, 2007

Dr. Brian G. Benoit  
Chairperson  
Patented Medicine Prices Review Board  
Box L40  
Standard Life Center  
333 Laurier Ave W.  
Suite 1400  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 1C1

Dear Dr. Benoit:

On behalf of the Best Medicines Coalition, we first of all would like to thank you for the invitation to attend your consultation on September 12, 2007. We had three members in attendance although two were also representing other consumer groups. The Best Medicines Coalition has long advocated for meaningful consumer consultation on issues pertaining to the costs and access to medications.

While we felt somewhat constrained by the 90 minutes devoted to this meeting, we did appreciate the opportunity to begin to explore ideas about your mandate, as well as some of the complexities that you face with regard to Category Three drugs. From our member's experience we are aware that so-called "me to" drugs are difficult to evaluate in that even a couple of minor changes in molecules in some drugs may benefit a number of patients in any given disease group. We would hope that the Board would keep this in mind in future deliberations.

Further, we appreciated your explanation of International Therapeutic Class Comparisons in setting prices for patented drugs. The Best Medicines Coalition has also been following these comparisons, and indeed are holding a conference on November 18 and 19th Re: the National Pharmaceutical Strategy, which will address this and other critical issues.

We also noticed your recognition of the issues surrounding generic drugs, and your intention of reviewing this in the coming months. As some of the older drugs are coming "off patent", we see this as a critical issue facing all stakeholders. We predict that this will become an even bigger issue in the coming months and years, as currently Canadian prices for generic prescription drugs in 2006 were on the average more than double American prices for identical drugs. (Fraser Institute, 2007)



Two of us gave our business cards in the hope that the Best Medicines Coalition might have a seat at the table on the Working Group being established shortly. We note that the materials provided that the means of selecting “consumers” was not specified.

We hope that your objectives were met in this consultation and we look forward to further communication. Thank you again for inviting us to participate.

Yours truly,

Louise Binder, B.A., LL.B, LL.D (Hon), O.Ont.  
Chair, Best Medicines Coalition