



May 7-13, 2016

Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) Question Period Monitoring Report

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FEDERAL

May 11, 2016

Health

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, opioid overdoses are a growing epidemic across the country. Hundreds of people are dying. British Columbia has declared a public health emergency, yet the Minister of Health abandoned regulations requiring tamper-resistant forms of these powerful prescription drugs. She claims that they will not solve the problem because they only apply to a single narcotic.

However, the solution is obvious: make the entire class of opioids, including fentanyl, tamper-proof, as the U.S. is doing.

Why will the minister not do so and save lives?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite has raised a very important matter, and that is the matter of prescription drug abuse in this country. It is something with which I have the deepest concern. I am pleased to work with my colleagues, including those in British Columbia, who have particularly led the way on this file.

It will require a comprehensive approach, one that includes prescriber guidelines, one that includes patient information, one that includes treatment, and one that includes prevention.

We will address all matters of evidence to make sure that we have the best way forward, and a comprehensive plan.

NOVA SCOTIA

May 12, 2016

PREM.: OPIOID USE (N.S.) - POSITION

[MS. MARIAN MANCINI « »](#) : Recent charges against a doctor in Tantallon have shed light on ongoing concerns about opiate use in Nova Scotia. A UN report says that on a per capita basis, Canada consumes more prescription drugs than any other country in the world. In March, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published guidelines urging doctors to try non-drug approaches first to treat chronic pain and to prescribe opiates sparingly, and I'll table that.

I ask the Premier, what is the government's position on the current state of opiate use in Nova Scotia?

[THE PREMIER « »](#) : I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously health care providers - doctors, pharmacists across this province are people who prescribe the medications. The honourable member, in her question, raised an important piece that I think many Nova Scotians are looking for alternate ways of dealing with health care issues. We've seen it and I would add to that piece that we, as citizens, need to begin to take control of our own health care, ensuring that we continue to begin to live healthier lifestyles.

I said the other exciting piece, we are a generation right now that is going to have an opportunity not only to do that, but we have an opportunity to shape what our health care delivery model looks like with the current announcement around the new hospital and some services being moved out into the community where people are living. This is an exciting time in terms of the health care delivery model change that we can make for the next 50 years. But when it comes to prescribing prescriptions to patients across this province, it obviously would be between the doctor and their patient.

[MS. MANCINI « »](#) : Just few weeks ago the Auditor General was critical of this government's sluggish pace in implementing a prescription drug monitoring program. Today the Department of Health and Wellness has said there will be further delays in implementing this program. Mr. Speaker, in response to a lack of government action on this issue, Nova Scotia's College of Physicians and Surgeons has begun its own initiative to rein in opiate prescriptions.

So I ask the Premier, why is the government dragging its feet on this serious issue?

[THE PREMIER « »](#) : Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. We continue to work with our health care providers across this province. She referenced the physician organization, we'll continue to work with them and we'll ensure that that is implemented as quickly as possible.

[MS. MANCINI « »](#) : Mr. Speaker, for those suffering from addiction to opioids, access to health services can make the difference between life and death. This morning our caucus spoke with a man in Cape Breton who said that access to a methadone program helped save his son's life. In late March, Direction 180 in Halifax announced it had to lay off staff, reduce its hours, and stop accepting new patients because of a lack of funding. It has made an appeal to the provincial government for more funding.

I ask the Premier, will his government answer the call for more funding to support the work of Direction 180?

[THE PREMIER « »](#) : I want to thank the honourable member for the question. That request would have gone to the Minister of Health and Wellness. We have provided the same funding they were provided with last year, and the request that has come in is being reviewed.

[MR. SPEAKER « »](#) : The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.