

August 17, 2005

Victoria Times Colonist
Editor
Box 300
Victoria, BC V8W 2N4

Dear Editor,

Re: PharmaCare budget balloons, August 12.

I wish to address two erroneous points in the August 12th Times Colonists report on increasing PharmaCare budgets which suggests community pharmacies are striking it rich at the expense of a taxpayer-funded prescription drug plan.

Average dispensing fee increases, based on data we have from the province's PharmaCare program, dispel any suggestion of a 300 per cent increase in recent years; the figures we have for the period of 2000-2004 suggest an increase of 23.5 per cent (which reflects major increases in pharmacist wage rates during the period due to a shortage of pharmacists). What has changed dramatically is the way PharmaCare pays for drugs and pharmacists' professional services through PharmaCare plan changes that took effect in January, 2002 and in May, 2003 with the introduction of Fair PharmaCare.

As a result, the average dispensing fee *paid by PharmaCare* has changed, but this is mostly attributable to the PharmaCare plan changes, and not to the level of dispensing fees charged by pharmacies.

Sincerely,

Marnie Mitchell
CEO
B.C. Pharmacy Association