

# Coalition of Concerned Citizens

## Press Release

Senior, consumer and labour groups concerned about secret government agreements that threaten access to affordable medicines for Canadians

OTTAWA, July 3, 2008 /CNW/ -- A coalition of senior, consumer, and labour groups announced today that they are investigating the recent trend of provincial governments to enter into secret tender agreements with pharmaceutical companies.

A research report released today by Aidan Hollis, an economist at the University of Calgary's Institute for Advanced Policy Research, suggests that the coalition has cause to worry. Hollis's report demonstrates that BC PharmaCare's recent use of a secret tender for olanzapine – a blockbuster anti-psychotic drug – has resulted in out-of-pocket and privately-insured patients in British Columbia paying the highest price for olanzapine in the country.

Hollis's findings have led the coalition to mobilize against the use of secret government tendering for pharmaceuticals. At present, the coalition is comprised of the following organizations:

- Alliance of Seniors / Older Canadians Network
- Canadian Pensioners Concerned Incorporated
- National Union of Public and General Employees

Derrell Dular, Managing Director of the Alliance of Seniors / Older Canadians Network said: "We are concerned about whether recent cost containment practices will actually result in higher drug prices for people without drug benefits."

Hollis's report suggests that not only is Dular's cost concern warranted but also that secret tendering could lead to reduced access to drugs in the future – even for PharmaCare. Hollis worries that generic drug manufacturers will refuse to continue spending the money to end drug patent monopolies, causing patients across the board to lose in the long run.

James Clancy, National President of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), one of Canada's largest unions with over 340,000 members, said: "The B.C. government has entered into one secret agreement of which we are aware and it threatens to enter into several more. The olanzapine agreement has BC's citizens paying 63% more for the drug than those in Alberta pay for the exact same drug. This alone suggests that the sole source tendering strategy may be misguided."

The group will be seeking a meeting with the B.C. Minister of Health to voice their concerns. Hollis's report is available online at

<http://www.iapr.ca/researchandpublications/groups/policybriefs>

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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## **ABOUT**

- **Alliance of Seniors / Older Canadians Network**

Founded in 1993, the Alliance of Seniors / Older Canadians Network is a diverse and growing, non-partisan, not-for-profit coalition of individuals and organizations representing the concerns of older adults (50 plus). Its mission is to preserve and enhance Canada's social programs on behalf of present and future generations; to promote a society where all persons have an equal opportunity to live with dignity, to realize their potential, and to participate in the democratic process; and to educate and raise public awareness about the values, life experiences, and lessons learned by Canada's older citizens.

- **Canadian Pensioners Concerned Incorporated**

Canadian Pensioners Concerned Incorporated (CPC) is a national organization with charitable status. CPC works for the establishment of an acceptable and dignified living standard for older citizens of Canada and their families. CPC's goal is to advocate on behalf of older persons, to ensure that systems, legislation and programs that serve to assist and protect seniors are in place and are implemented responsibly and to educate the general public about the needs of older adults.

- **National Union of Public and General Employees**

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is a family of 11 component unions. Taken together we are one of the largest unions in Canada, representing working people in the public, private and non-profit sectors.