

## **“Canada cannot be the drugstore for the United States”**

By: Linda Wilhelm

Progress is being made in leaps and bounds on the issue of Cross Border Internet Pharmacy (CBIP). Everyone is jumping on the bandwagon including Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh.

On October 12, 2004, Liberal MP Don Boudria posed a question in the House of Commons directed at Mr. Dosanjh. He asked him when he intended to shut down CBIP or at least take steps to monitor them. Mr. Boudria, a strong opponent to Internet pharmacies, pressed the issue again at a Canadian Association of Retired Persons/Best Medicines Coalition press conference in Toronto, October 18, calling for governments to shut down Internet pharmacies filling prescriptions for American patients.

Mr. Dosanjh did a 360-degree change in position on CBIP in a speech he delivered at Harvard Medical School in Boston on November 10. He stated that, “Canada cannot be the drugstore of the United States,” and admitted that the practice could have a severe negative impact for Canadians and their access to prescription medicines. Mr. Dosanjh also referenced the unethical behavior of physicians and pharmacists who engage in the practice of filling prescriptions for Americans who they do not see and are not their patients. Until November 10, the federal government’s position on CBIP was disbelief. They could see no problems or potential problems for Canadians with this practice. Now that the potential for harm to Canadians has been recognized, we hope Mr. Dosanjh will act to shut down CBIP.

Liberal MP Wajid Khan introduced a Private Members Bill in the House of Commons on November 15. Bill C-282, if passed, would amend the Food and Drug Act in a manner that would require a special permit for the export of all drugs. A clause in the amendment states that the permit would not be granted if it were illegal for that country to import drugs. The Bill also contains a clause that compels Pharmacists and Physicians to abide by their regulatory bodies position on prescribing medications.

But, as determined as some politicians are to kill CBIP, Business Services USA are just as determined to keep the business alive.

Flyers have been sent to Canadian doctors promising \$100,000 to \$135,000 US annually in return for their compliance to review “detailed patient files through online consultation and/or co-signing American doctors’ prescriptions.” Mr. Boudria came out swinging again condemning the flyers on December 7. “This stretches medical ethics like they were a rubber band,” he said. “What’s going to be in the next ad? Sign prescriptions and get a free toaster?”

The President of the Canadian Medical Association, Dr Albert Schumacher is offended by the direct marketing approach saying that there is nothing in it about helping patients – it’s about making a profit.

Bill C-282 has had its first reading in the House. To ensure its passage into Law, write your MP to encourage him/her to support Bill C-282 and keep medicines meant for Canadians in Canada.