

Luanne Metz

MLA for Calgary-Varsity

CRITIC FOR HEALTH



May 15, 2024

Changes to the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology in Health

Hon. Mark Holland
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

I recently received the attached letter from Amanda Ross-White, Vice-President, of the Canadian Health Libraries Association. It outlines recent changes to the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology in Health (CADTH), which could have long lasting impacts on the ability of provinces in accessing the necessary evidence to make appropriate decisions in an increasingly complex health care landscape.

I agree with Ms. Ross-White and her request to reconsider these changes at CADTH, and “put a stop to any further changes that risk harming evidence-informed decision making in our health systems.”

As you know we now live in an era of expensive biologic therapies. While these new therapies are often life changing, they have a huge impact on provincial health budgets. We need to be very careful that the evidence favouring their approval is solid and not biased by the pharmaceutical industry.

The reviews done independently by CADTH are important for that reason. In addition, they obtain less biased clinical perspectives on the evidence because a proven benefit of a new drug may have little practical value for the increased price tag.

In my prior academic career, which was largely in academic drug development in multiple sclerosis, I witnessed the biased marketing of the pharmaceutical industry. Indeed, we would not likely be experiencing the opioid crisis to the same degree without their misleading messaging - an observation that the courts agree with.

It is necessary to have the services of CADTH to facilitate the information needed for drug approvals and for the RAPID reviews to support updates to the criteria. I have been involved in CADTH reviews as an academic and over the past 20+ years, I worked with the Pharmaceutical

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Branch of Alberta Health to develop and update prescribing criteria for drugs in multiple sclerosis. The work of CADTH should not be duplicated by every province yet that will be the case if we lose this joint resource.

While CADTH does not tell provinces what to do with their reviews, and every province still decides what to fund and what criteria they will require, the implications of these Federal changes risks putting additional strain on the already underfunded Alberta Health system.

I write to you today as the Opposition Critic for Health in Alberta, as an academic with extensive experience in the field, and an elected official committed to standing up for Albertans and doing the right thing for them.

With that in mind, I ask you to take a look at these proposed changes, and consider the long lasting negative impacts they could have not just on the provincial budgets, but the Canadians who depend on unbiased decision making and evidence.

I look forward to hearing your response, and the possibility of future discussions to address my concerns. I have also cc'd the Alberta Minister of Health as I believe this is not a partisan issue, but one where all three of us can agree on as a priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Metz".

Dr Luanne Metz, MD, FRCPC, FCAHS
MLA Calgary Varsity
NDP Health Critic
Professor Emerita, University of Calgary

Cc

Amanda Ross-White, Vice-President, of the Canadian Health Libraries Association
Hon. Adriana LaGrange

ATTACHMENT: Letter