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MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO CREATE NEW DRUG SYSTEM

The McGuinty government has introduced legislation that would, if passed, enable a comprehensive plan to get better value for money which will allow reinvestments to deliver better care to patients. The plan would:

1. Improve patient access to drugs by:

- Introducing a Conditional Listing category that would allow patients to access new drugs on a conditional basis while its evaluated for a formal listing
- Making rapid funding decisions for breakthrough drugs for life-threatening conditions
- Introducing equity into the system by aligning all of Ontario's publicly-funded drug programs so that the same rules of access apply everywhere
- Moving towards the elimination of restrictive listing categories like Limited Use and Individual Clinical Review (Section 8) that burden patients and doctors with administrative hurdles and impede access to needed drugs
- Creating an Exceptional Access mechanism that would work as a safety valve for certain patients when they can't access a drug in any other way

2. Ensure better value for money by:

- Paying less for generic drugs by changing the pricing structure
- Negotiating more competitive prices for brand name drugs
- Working to develop chronic disease partnerships with brand name drug companies
- Increasing the fees paid to pharmacies to dispense drugs to better reflect the true costs of dispensing
- Removing the hidden rebates paid to pharmacies
- Enforcing drug pricing compliance from manufacturers which will protect pharmacists from unauthorized price increases
- Allowing greater interchangeability of brand and generic drugs

3. Promote the appropriate use of medications by:

- Paying pharmacists for providing direct patient care services like medication management reviews, in recognition of their value as front-line health care providers
- Developing web-based, independent, best practice guidelines to ensure the right drug for the right person at the right time. This Shared Care Network would help doctors make the best prescribing decisions and help patients adhere to their drug therapies

4. Invest in innovative health system research by:

- Establishing an Innovation Research Fund to support drug policy by investigating the value of medicines across the entire health care system

5. Strengthen transparency and accountability by:

- Establishing formal governance principles to improve transparency and accountability
- Appointing an Executive Officer to manage the publicly-funded drug system, including making listing decisions, publicly communicating listing decisions and working more closely with stakeholders
- Giving patients an active role in drug listing decisions by appointing two patient representatives to the renamed Committee to Evaluate Drugs (formerly Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee)
- Creating a Citizens' Council to give the public an opportunity to guide public drug policy
- Forming a Pharmacy Council to help develop policy and reimbursement models for pharmacists
- Generating more transparency by publicly reporting on the status of drug reviews as well as the work of the Committee and Councils

What this plan would mean for Ontarians:

- No changes to benefits. No changes in co-payments, deductibles, or eligibility criteria for Ontario Drug Program recipients
- Faster drug funding decisions mean patients can access drugs faster.
- More drugs will be funded at least on a conditional basis
- Patients would be involved in priority setting and the drug funding decision making process

What this plan would mean for cash payers:

- Ontarians who pay for their own drugs would benefit from off-formulary interchangeability meaning their prescriptions would be filled with less expensive generic drugs

What this plan would mean for doctors:

- Doctors will be burdened with less paperwork imposed with the replacement of Section 8.
- Doctors will enjoy more access to independent best practices information through the proposed Share-Care Network

What this plan would mean for pharmacists:

- Pharmacists would be compensated for providing enhanced patient counseling and medication management reviews and will be integrated into primary care models, recognizing the valuable role they play in the delivery of health care
- Pharmacy reimbursement structure will more accurately reflect actual costs of dispensing and distribution
- Independent best practice prescribing guidelines will help ensure the right drug for the right person at the right time

What this plan would mean for employers:

- Employer drug plans will gain substantial savings through generic drug substitution permitted by off-formulary interchangeability

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