

David D. Schreck, Ph.D.
145 East Windsor Road
North Vancouver, British Columbia V7N 1J9
cell 604-619-1783 res 604-984-8344
e-mail: Schreck@StrategicThoughts.com

March 22, 2006

Mr. Wayne K. Strelloff, CA
Auditor General
8 Bastion Square
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 1X4

by fax to 250 387-1230

Dear Mr. Strelloff:

Re: 2005/08 Report #8 – Managing PharmaCare

Page 64 of your recent report refers to the ministry's 2003/04 Annual Report and says that according to it "...any potential negative impacts of Fair PharmaCare are being monitored, and that preliminary evaluations indicate that drug use has not decreased in either the senior or non-senior groups since implementation. A partnership with Harvard University to carry out a long-term evaluation of Fair PharmaCare until 2009 was also reported." Accompanying this letter is an article I've published with respect to that observation as well as a freedom of information request I've submitted to the Ministry of Health.

Could you please tell me whether you or your staff actually examined the "preliminary evaluations" referenced in the 2003/04 Annual Report or whether you relied exclusively on that second hand account of their existence and content?

When Quebec made similar changes, a study by Robyn Tamblyn and 13 others, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA. 2001;285:421-429), analyzed the impact of higher user fees for Quebec's prescription drug program. They looked at a random sample of 93,500 elderly persons and examined "Mean daily number of essential and less essential drugs used per month, ED visits, and serious adverse events (hospitalization, nursing home admission, and mortality) before and after policy introduction." The study found a reduced use of essential drugs and an increase in serious adverse effects related to that decrease. If BC's Ministry of Health has preliminary evidence that is inconsistent with the Tamblyn study, it should be published.

Sincerely,

David D. Schreck

enclosures

cc: David Cubberley, MLA and Health Critic (fax 250 387-4680)