



**Cancer Advocacy Coalition**

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November 28, 2008

To: Hon. Olayuk Akesuk, Minister of Health, NU; Hon. Yves Bolduc, Minister of Health, QC; Hon. David Caplan, Minister of Health, ON; Hon. Douglas Currie, Minister of Health, PE; Hon. Chris d'Entremont, Minister of Health, NS; Hon. Glen Hart, Minister of Health, YT; Hon. Sandy Lee, Minister of Health, NT; Hon. Ronald Liepert, Minister of Health, AB; Hon. Don McMorris, Minister of Health, SK; Hon. Michael Murphy, Minister of Health, NB; Hon. Theresa Oswald, Minister of Health, MB; Hon. Ross Wiseman, Minister of Health, NL

Re: **Joint Oncology Drug Review**

Dear Minister,

It is disappointing that a promised meeting with stakeholders this fall to review final recommendations from the evaluation will not occur. The dissonance noted at the June 25 meeting, between expectations and draft recommendations, remains unresolved. The fear of groups like CACC is that the consultation exercise will be seen in hindsight as a superficial nod to patient interests only for the purpose of claiming to have listened.

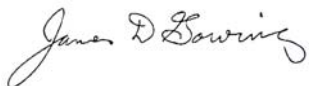
For several years the Cancer Advocacy Coalition has been attempting to explain that cancer is not one disease but hundreds of variations from the starting point of cell mutation. In its many forms of growth, cancers are aggressively life-threatening, and require unique measurements for outcomes including progression-free survival. Cancer drugs do not fit into the standard review processes used by provincial drug plans for minor ailments.

The announcement of JODR in February 2007 appeared to indicate some recognition that cancer drugs need a specialized review process to address the complexity of this disease. We urge the Deputy Ministers of Health to consider the significance of all the differences between cancer and other ailments before retreating to either CDR governance or a CDR model of drug reviews. Any "streamlining" of processes that impedes a better understanding of cancer drugs would only confound efforts to control this disease.

JODR does need to be more transparent, accountable and independent from other drug review mechanisms for non-oncology drugs, with its own clinical and pharmacoeconomic analysis.

Thank you for your thoughtful efforts on behalf of cancer patients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Gowing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

James D. Gowing  
Chair, CACC

JDG/dg