



PRESS RELEASE

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IVSED calls for stronger regulations to protect Canadians against excessive drug prices

In our response to yet another re-writing of the PMPRB Guidelines, *Independent Voices for Safe and Effective Drugs (IVSED)* submitted its critique of the latest consultations and recommendations for moving forward.

IVSED supported the proposed 2019 PMPRB Guidelines, as well as the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board's transparent, fair, and democratic process of consultations.

The decision not to implement the proposed 2019 Guidelines leaves Canadians more exposed to excessive and unfair prices for the medicines they need to survive. It also endangers efforts to establish a National Pharmacare program that will need to access fairly-priced essential medicines.

"We were disappointed that Health Canada retreated from earlier commitments to strengthen the Price Review Board's ability to ensure Canadians are paying a fair price for the drugs they need. Instead, the federal government has backed away from guidelines developed over a period of extensive consultations with the public in the face of the aggressive tactics employed by the pharmaceutical lobby and the patient groups they fund," said Sharon Batt, co-author of the IVSED report. "We believe that, instead of strengthening the PMPRB, Health Canada has weakened the Board's ability to fulfill its mandate to protect vulnerable patients from excessive and unfair drug prices."

"Canada has the third highest drug prices in the world," she said. "Other countries control drug prices much more effectively and not only have access to medicines, but at a much lower price. This is why strong PMPRB legislation and regulations are important."

Pharmaceutical companies and industry-funded patient groups argue that regulating drug prices will keep life-saving drugs from coming to Canada. IVSED contests this dangerous myth. Canada is an important market that the industry would not ignore. As well, the clinical benefit of new drugs is often ambiguous or unknown, yet they are routinely priced at hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for a single patient.

"We also question the role played by some of the patient groups in this process. Like many others in Canada and internationally, IVSED has concerns that relationships between the pharmaceutical industry and patient groups take place outside any regulatory framework requiring transparency about what those groups may be required to do under the terms of industry funding," continued Batt. "Many independent groups like IVSED believe that the financial links between advocacy and industry weaken the role of patient groups, undermining the role of patient advocacy."

IVSED wants the federal government to put in place a sunshine act that requires drug companies to fully disclose the amount of money they provide each year to each patient group that receives funding

in Canada. In addition, patient groups that do not receive drug company funding, either because they reject it or are not chosen by the industry, should be able to apply for public funds to support the important role of advocacy.

For the full text of IVSED's submission, go to: www.ivesed.org/pricecontrols.

Independent Voices for Safe & Effective Drugs (IVSED) is a pan-Canadian organization whose members include academics, researchers, healthcare providers and patient and consumer advocates with extensive expertise in pharmaceuticals and Canada's health policies. We joined together to build a stronger voice, free of industry influence, for independent and objective solutions for safe, effective and affordable medicines in Canada. All the patient and public interest health groups we work with maintain financial independence from the pharmaceutical industry. In this respect, unlike many patient advocates, we are free to take positions on drug policy based on research evidence and the lived experience of patients.

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