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**Nova Scotia Law Amendments Submission Regarding Bill 17,
Fair Drug Pricing Act.**

**Submitted by: Stephen W Brown Ph.C.
Pharmacist/Owner**

May 5, 2011

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and Committee Members. Thank You for allowing me to speak personally on Bill 17 and how it will affect my business and the practice of pharmacy in general.

My name is Stephen Brown and I am the pharmacist/owner of Sexton's Pharmasave located in Sydney Mines, Cape Breton. Our independent pharmacy is one of two in the area that services Sydney Mines and surrounding areas of Bras D'or, Florence and Alder Point. A population base of approximately 9000 people.

My store was opened in 1973 by my partner Barry Sexton. He opened as a small street front store and worked all the hours early by himself building the business. My father joined him after 18 months as a certified dispenser to allow Barry to expand the hours and level of service.

I graduated from Dalhousie in 1984 from the College of Pharmacy and began my career with Shoppers Drug Mart in Sydney River before taking a store for them in Woodstock, N.B. After eighteen months of running a SDM store, Barry called me to become a partner. I jumped at the opportunity to move home and have the chance to work side by side with my dad. This was twenty five years ago. A lot has changed since 1986. We had our first expansion a couple of years after that and then another within 5 years. The whole time we continued to grow with our community because of the strong relationships forged with our customers and a commitment to a stronger customer service. Coming from a drug store chain to an independently owned pharmacy it has quickly become apparent how much we rely on this strong bond we create with our customers.

My wife Brenda and I have raised our three children in the community. Our oldest, Reilly, is in second year at Dalhousie taking science. Our second, Corey, is going to Dal in the fall for engineering and our third, Kasey, is going into Junior High. In our 23 years of marriage we have made

"Serving the Northside Since 1973"

a conscious effort to give back to the community that has been so good to us. We both coach numerous sports which include hockey, soccer, basketball and baseball as well as community programs such as Sparks, Brownies and Scouts and church programs such as Council and Sunday school.

My partner retired 3 years ago. Before he retired we decided to expand one more time, building a store that would provide Sydney Mines with a destination for all their drug store needs. The last expansion provided us with enough area to expand our Home Health Care section to a size that would provide the seniors in our area with a destination for this growing need. We are the only store within 25 kilometers that provides licensed fitters for compression hosiery as well as selections of scooters, lift chairs, bathroom safety and ambulatory care. All of this is possible because we recognize the needs of our community and try to provide our customers with what they need to live healthy, independent, longer lives in their community.

The store has grown to a point where we employ 20 people, 16 of which are full time employees. They all live in Sydney Mines and have a strong connection to the people we serve. We go out of our way to provide our customers with the best service for all of their health care needs. The people in Sydney Mines rely on us. We support all sports in our community which would include sponsorship of Little League Baseball, Minor Hockey as well as basketball and soccer. We provide seniors days in conjunction with the Northside Homemakers several times per year. We have been a Gold Sponsor of the C.B. Palliative Care Golf Tournament since its inception as well as the C.B. Hospital Foundation Golf Tournament. We are more recently involved with the Breakfast for Kids and Northside Hospital Foundation fund raisers. We provide donations to all church functions on the Northside. We provide a local Special Olympian with the monetary means to attend the national meet. We provide the high school with scholarship donations. These are just a few things we do to give back to the community.

Besides the assistance we provide to everyone mentioned, there are numerous things we do that you can't even put a price on. Every year dozens of my senior customers come in to get me to help fill out their Pharmacare paperwork. I had a senior come into my office last week to

help him get in touch with his private health care provider to review his options before joining the Senior Pharmacare program. Intimidated by talking to these people that he had a hard time contacting, we spent an hour getting the answers he needed. He left happy and it didn't cost him anything. I had a lady with Muscular Dystrophy come in looking at a scooter in our Home Health Care Dept. She had a distinct need for a scooter to maintain her independence but really couldn't afford one and didn't qualify for assistance. I ended up selling her one below cost. I have several charge accounts for seniors to spread out their Pharmacare premiums over a manageable time. We blister pack for seniors to improve their health outcomes while trying to maintain their independence. We provide free prescription delivery for seniors in our community that have no means of getting to the store. All these items mentioned provide me no immediate monetary benefit. They do however provide me with the satisfaction of knowing that my customers are being provided with the very best care that I can provide. These are things that echo back to what makes independent pharmacy very unique in our community.

This brings us to the reason I sit before you today and that is Bill 17, The Fair Drug Pricing Act. The Health and Wellness Minister has presented a bill to law that in its present form could cripple the way Pharmacy and especially independent community pharmacies provide quality health care. I am not here to tell you that I am opposed to change. We all want to see a sustainable Health Care System that will provide us with quality health care into our senior years at the same time providing government with the savings they need to realize balanced with a fair reimbursement model for Pharmacy. The Department of Health and Wellness is looking to save 6 million dollars in the Pharmacare budget. The bill in its present form, without a new Tariff Agreement in place, (the working document between DHW and Pharmacy that spells out how we are reimbursed for the services we provide), will provide the government with a savings of between 35 and 40 million dollars. These savings come directly from pharmacy and not the pharmaceutical industry. My store personally will experience a loss of approximately \$115,000.00 . This comes directly off the bottom line. The uncertainty of not knowing what increases we will receive in the new Tariff Agreement leaves me wondering if I am going to be able to provide the same high level of customer service that my customers are used to and

come to expect. It is also a burden on my staff who helped make my store what it is today. This will affect their quality of life as well if I have to cut hours or worse if I have to let them go. The government speaks of providing us with an expanded scope of practice which was just passed a couple of weeks ago in Bill 13. These are all ideas that are going to take time in implementing. It is for this reason that I feel Bill 17 should be delayed until the DHW and PANS have sufficient time to figure out how we will be compensated for the new duties and also for the core duties of dispensing.

In closing I would like to thank the committee for allowing me to state my concerns. I hope that government does its due diligence to ensure pharmacy remains economically viable so that we can continue to provide our customers and your constituents with the highest quality health care possible. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen W Brown Ph.C
Pharmacist/Owner