

COR-2020-091355

May 19, 2020

Mr. Robert Bick
Ms. Deb Maskens
Co-founders
CanCertainty Coalition
info@cancertaintyforall.ca

Dear Mr. Bick and Ms. Maskens:

I am responding to your letter of April 14, 2020, in which you request immediate policy action and flexibility for cancer patients during COVID-19. Specifically, I note your request to provide immediate, short-term relief from Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Plan (NLPDP) for out-of-pocket co-payments for catastrophic drug expenses; support patients transitioning to public drug programs if they lose employer benefits; and provide assurance that a patient's cancer treatment algorithms will be flexible when their treatment pathways are changed due to COVID-19 safety measures.

We appreciate the financial challenges individuals with high drug costs face. Your recommendations to provide short-term relief for out-of-pocket co-payments for catastrophic drug expenses will be considered as policy decisions are made. Patients who have lost drug coverage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, can apply to NLPDP for possible coverage. Information on the application can be obtained online at www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/prescription/index.html, by phone 1-888-859-3535 or by e-mail: LIDPinfo@gov.nl.ca.

With respect to flexibility with cancer treatment algorithms, we rely upon our clinicians to determine the most appropriate treatment options to ensure patient safety and minimize potential exposure COVID-19. I note that you have copied your correspondence to the Director and Clinical Chief of the Cancer Program at Eastern Health. I will defer this issue to these officials for review and consideration.

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In the meantime, I am sure you are aware there is a Cancer Patient Navigator. These highly trained cancer nurses work closely with families, as well as family doctors/care providers, surgeons, and cancer specialists, to provide information and knowledge to patients about their care. They can provide ongoing support to patients as they go through tests, treatments and stages of the cancer journey. Information on this program is available at www.cancercare.easternhealth.ca/patients-and-family/patient-navigation.

Thank you for your advocacy on behalf of cancer patients in this province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Haggie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

JOHN HAGGIE, MD, FRCS
MHA-Gander
Minister

cc: Ms. Janet Templeton, Director, Cancer Care Program, Eastern Health
Dr. Jehan Siddiqui, Clinical Chief, Cancer Care Program, Eastern Health