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**Better Pharmacare Coalition's prescription for a healthy economy:
Complete the BC PharmaCare reform process**

Although the economy has been the central issue during this provincial election campaign, the issues of health care delivery and access to medicines remain key factors in deciding which party to support.

The Better Pharmacare Coalition ("BPC") realizes there are no easy answers or quick fixes to the complex challenges facing British Columbia's health care system. Throwing new money at an old problem is not the right solution for British Columbians.

The BPC represents provincial and national health organizations and consumer groups with a mandate to speak on behalf of 2 million British Columbia citizens who need help paying for medically necessary prescription medications – medications that keep them breathing, walking, and living and enable them to get back to work, contributing to our provincial economy, not costing it money.

Our goal is to identify and strengthen patient care and choice, ensuring BC is a leader in providing the right medication, at the right time, for the right patient. That is why the BPC welcomed the April 2008 decision by Government to accept the recommendations of the Pharmaceutical Task Force to improve BC PharmaCare program coverage.

During this provincial election, the BPC has asked for the commitment from the BC Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party to complete the BC PharmaCare reform process and the full implementation of the Pharmaceutical Task Force Report recommendations, if elected to serve as the next Government in BC.

The focus of the Pharmaceutical Task Force recommendations is to:

- increase access to new, effective medicines and technologies;
- reduce the cost of high priced generic drugs;
- provide greater control and choice for patients; and
- create a more transparent drug review and approval process with robust public participation.

By fully implementing the recommendations, Government would significantly improve the health of British Columbians living with serious illnesses and chronic diseases. Just as importantly, at this time of cost pressures on the BC healthcare system, the Task Force has made concrete and achievable recommendations to reform the province's pharmaceutical processes to ensure Government gets the best possible value for taxpayers' dollars, potentially saving millions of dollars in direct and indirect health care costs.

To put it in perspective, the Pharmacare budget has increased by more than 50% since 2001, from \$654 million to over \$1 billion today. Now 300,000 more families receive support than under the old Pharmacare program in 2001. More than 23 million prescriptions are now covered each year under the BC PharmaCare program. But there is still much work to be done. And what our political leaders must recognize is that completing the reform of the BC PharmaCare process is vital to ensuring the sustainable health of our provincial economy.

The consultation process that has occurred to date since the release of the Pharmaceutical Task Force recommendations has been marked by open, transparent dialogue among stakeholder groups and between stakeholders and the Task Force implementation team. This process has moved forward positively and constructively to a point today where a majority of health stakeholders in BC are aligned and are reaching consensus on key issues around the reform of BC PharmaCare.

Over the past 12 months, Government has worked with stakeholder groups – like the BPC – to ensure that the views, needs and priorities of those most affected by pharmaceutical management issues in the province are fully considered in the development of a reformed BC PharmaCare review process.

As Election Day nears, what BC voters need to know is which Party is committed to the actual implementation of the Pharmaceutical Task Force recommendations. The Better Pharmacare Coalition urges the political parties to show leadership and make improving the BC drug policy a top priority in this election. In the voting booth, we urge voters to think about health care and PharmaCare. Then vote for the Party who best represents these vital interests for the people who depend on BC government PharmaCare the most: our most vulnerable citizens.

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