House of Commons
Chambre des communes
Canada

**House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance – Pre-budget Consultations 2013**

**This brief is submitted by:**

(•) **an organization** **Organization name:** Medical Reform Group

**or**

( ) **an individual** **Name:** _____

**Topic:** Health

## *Recommendation 1: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

The cost of prescription drugs has been one of the principal cost drivers in the health budget over the past 20 years. The provinces and territories have made significant progress in the past 5 years in beginning to reduce the cost of pharmaceuticals and medical devices to Canadians. What is needed now is system-wide coordination and facilitation best implemented at a pan-Canadian level, to ensure that additional improvements benefit all equally. We foresee a framework and structure that could support collaboration with all regions to enhance the evidence base for a comprehensive pharmacare strategy, and leadership with private and public sector partners to design and implement a strategy to reduce drugs costs for residents from all walks of life.

**Expected cost or savings:** From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

$1 billion or more

5 or more years

**Federal funding:** Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

The federal department of finance is best positioned to determine the balance between more effective use of existing resources and new spending, as it is estimated that more comprehensive drug coverage would not only improve Canada's market competitiveness and our overall health but also reduce rates of poverty and social inequality. A relatively small investment of $10 million per year for the next 5 years could provide for significant federal level project monitoring, possibly some pilot projects to realign, for example, private and employer insurance and all the public sector benefits plans (seniors, rehab services, social assistance recipients, etc.)

**Intended beneficiaries:** Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

A comprehensive strategy would expand publicly supported coverage from a limited number of designated groups to all residents of the country, and be designed to ensure coverage for all and cost no more in the short term than all existing drug expenditures. Over the next 5 to 10 years, a revenue plan could be devised to provide first-dollar coverage (without copayments or deductibles) for all.

**General impacts:** Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

Assured access for all to medically necessary drugs would improve the health status of all, with lower long term costs to the federal treasury and would also improve the ability of Canadians to be involved in the economy, including adding to revenues through personal taxes.

**Topic:** Health

## Recommendation 2: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

The interim restoration and enhancement of refugee health coverage benefits for all those living in Canada is a humanitarian public health measure which will contribute to the health security and health status of all by ensuring high quality medically-necessary care for all conditions regardless of the individual situation of the patient.

**Expected cost or savings:** From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

$1 million-4.9 million

Immediately

**Federal funding:** Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

In the short term, we recommend the restoration of the Interim Federal Health Benefit to all at a cost of approximately $20 million annually; in the medium and longer term the costs of this program related to drug benefits would be integrated into the pan-Canadian pharmacare strategy.

**Intended beneficiaries:** Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

As above, this recommendation would benefit all residents in our country regardless of status or origin. Refugees would benefit directly, whereas the health status of all would be improved with a seamless provision of care to those who do not meet the current provincial/territorial requirements for coverage.

**General impacts:** Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

As with proposal for leadership on a national pharmacare strategy, improved health status is likely to be associated with an improved standard of living and an increased ability of the population to contribute to general tax revenues.

**Topic:** Business taxation and regulatory issues

## Recommendation 3: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

The Canada Health Act was introduced to increase accountability for the investments taxpayers make in publicly funded and administered for all, by enumerating conditions for provinces and territories to receive health care funding. Although successive annual reports have reported on a broad range of violations, in recent years little has been done to either discourage persistent violations or to encourage more effective use of public resources in advancing health for all. We believe accountability is a central requirement for all government programs and should be reinstated following the example of former Health Minister Diane Marleau.

**Expected cost or savings:** From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

$5 million -$9.9 million

Immediately

**Federal funding:** Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

The federal department of finance is best positioned to determine the balance between more effective use of existing resources and new spending. A relatively modest investment of $10 million per year for the next 5 years could provide the design and implementation of a comprehensive monitoring structure to ensure that all Canadians get value for money in our health investments.

**Intended beneficiaries:** Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

Everyone in all parts of the country as they see accountability clearly enforced.

**General impacts:** Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

This measure should be part of a comprehensive approach to accountability for public investments.

Please use this page if you wish to provide more explanation about your recommendation(s).

We believe our proposals are consistent with a budget approach which seeks accountability for all current investments, and will begin to offer the kind of leadership all Canadians are seeking from the Government of Canada.
In the areas of health services in which many of our members are acknowledged international experts, we would be pleased to offer more specific recommendations as you proceed with implementation.

*Please note that at least one recommendation must be provided