

NDP: A plan to stop drug costs breaking family budgets

Stephen Harper has done nothing, Jack Layton will lower drug costs

VANCOUVER, Sept 26/08 - New Democrat Leader Jack Layton announced today that, if elected Prime Minister, he would launch a national program to make prescription drugs more affordable.

Layton slammed Stephen Harper for giving \$50 billion in tax breaks to wealthy corporations “while prescription drug costs break family budgets.”

If elected Prime Minister Layton said, “I will take the prudent, practical first steps to launch a national program to help Canadians afford prescription drugs, and save provinces billions of dollars in costs.” Layton emphasized that his plan was based on the report of the Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care.

Layton pointed to the success of British Columbia and other provinces with strong drug coverage plans, noting that programs like Pharmacare were widely accepted within the health care community.

Layton’s New Democrats will:

- Implement the Catastrophic Drug Transfer recommended by the Romanow Report.
- Start the transfer at \$1 billion in the first year, gradually increasing as finances permit.
- Support patients whose prescription drug costs become catastrophic –more than \$1,500 a year.
- Establish a national bulk purchasing program to greatly reduce costs.
- Reform drug patent laws to prevent ‘evergreening’ of brand name drugs by giant pharmaceuticals, substantially reducing costs to consumers.

Earlier in the campaign, the New Democrat Leader announced a plan to directly address the fact that five million Canadians don’t have a family doctor, by training 50% more doctors and nurses each year. Student loans would be forgiven for graduates who the commit their first ten years of practice to family medicine.

Layton praised New Democrat Tommy Douglas for strong leadership in taking on the wealthy and powerful to build Canada’s Medicare system.

“Today, Canadians still share Tommy’s vision of a fairer, better nation, always building for a brighter tomorrow. In twenty years time, Pharmacare will be as much a part of Canada as Medicare is today.”