

UPSE President Applauds Island Doctor's Resolution

Shelley Ward, President of the Prince Edward Island of Public Sector Employees is applauding Dr. Scott Cameron for the resolution that he submitted at the recent Canadian Medical Association meeting regarding financial assistance for persons facing catastrophic drug costs.

The resolution called for the development of a program that would cover the costs of all drugs that exceeded three percent of a family's after tax income. "This would be a great starting point," states Ward. "There are so many families that are struggling just to try and afford the basic necessities in life like food, shelter and clothing. When they are faced with the added burden of either a chronic or an acute medical expense, it is far too often more than they can handle. Many are forced to choose between food or medicine."

"We at UPSE have been advocating for improvements to the drug coverage that is available for our members upon retirement. Seniors on the Island are often unable to enjoy their retirement because they are now dealing with, not only the ailments and illnesses that are more prominent within the senior population, but also the stress of how they will be able to afford the additional expenses that they will incur to treat and/or manage them."

The resolution proposed by Dr. Cameron could translate into a saving on drug costs of over 50 percent for an average female Canadian senior. Statistics Canada states that 27 percent of women aged 65 years of age and over report using an average of five medications per month. Here on PEI the user pay portion of a prescription, under the Seniors Drug Assistance Plan, averages around \$16.00 (\$11.00 user pay plus \$5.00 professional fee). When you multiply that by five it comes to \$80.00 /month. If you consider the average after tax income for non-working single women in this age group to be \$1,200.00 per month, then their three percent threshold would be \$36.00 per month. This would translate into a saving of around \$44.00 per month or 55 percent on their monthly drug expenses.

"The governments, both federally and provincially, have to work together to develop a plan of action that will be not only sustainable but also effective in dealing with this situation. Dr Cameron's proposal is a long way from a National Pharmacare Program but it is a step in the right direction," concluded Ward.