From: <hedy.fry.a1@parl.gc.ca>
Date: 18 June, 2013 11:45:16 AM EDT
To: <_____> **Subject: FW: [Liberal / Assistance] Update: General feedback from Mary Jane Phillips (ticket #64445)**

Dear Ms. P_____,

Thank you for contacting my office on the regulation of Natural Health Products (NHP) in Canada. I know this is an issue of which many Canadians are concerned. I apologize for the delay in responding to your email. A staffing change resulted in the misplacement of some correspondence.

Over the last few decades more and more NHP's have made their way into the marketplace and into our homes. Most of these products are safe and effective, but if left unchecked, many new products could be marketed to Canadians that are not safe and may not achieve what it is set out to do according to its label.

The establishment of the Natural Health Products Directorate has been an ongoing process since the Advisory Panel on Natural Health Products was established in 1997. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Health heard witnesses on NHP's through 1997 and 1998 and presented its report in November 1998.

The Minister accepted all 53 recommendations from the Standing Committee's report and used them as the basis behind the development of a NHP policy framework. From 2000 to 2003 consultations were done with Canadians, industry, health care professionals and others as regulations were developed, published, and revised.

The Natural Health Products Regulations came into force in January 2004 with a two year transition period for site licensing and a six year transition for issuing of Drug Identification Numbers (DIN). Given the high number of NHP's available to Canadians at the time, it was understood that it would be a long process to review applications and evaluations. After six years, a large number of NHP's still required evaluation, which is why the Natural Health Products-Unprocessed Product Licence Applications Regulations were introduced. This measure expired on February 4, 2013, however we have been assured that evaluations will continue and these products will continue to remain available to Canadians.

Ensuring that products available to Canadians are evaluated for safety and efficacy is a key responsibility of any government. This must be achieved, however, without squeezing smaller companies out of the marketplace. Governments must take a balanced approach that allows Canadians to have access to NHP's, but also to provide as much information to Canadians as possible and to ensure the safety and efficacy of NHP's. It is important that accurate labels are used, that adverse reactions are immediately reported and that claims of safety and efficacy are proven through, either clinical trials, or references to published studies, journals, pharmacopoeias and traditional resources.

If NHP's were instead given their own unique category, as opposed to a subclass of "drugs", it would be important to understand any unintended consequences this change may pose and whether or not safety and efficacy may be compromised.

Thank you for bringing your concerns about the availability of NHP's to my attention and please do not hesitate to contact my office with any further questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,

Hon. Dr. Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P.
Vancouver Centre
Federal Liberal Health Critic