

Victoria concerned about EU trade pact

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B.C. government officials have told federal counterparts they don't want to pay the higher Pharmacare costs that could result if Ottawa signs a trade pact with the European Union (EU), Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation **Pat Bell** told *Business in Vancouver* January 13.

NDP leader **Adrian Dix** told *Business in Vancouver* last week that B.C. Premier **Christy Clark** should make clear to Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** that she opposes any clause in the proposed Canada-EU trade pact that would increase B.C. Pharmacare costs.

A 2011 study written by two notable academics found that B.C. would face an extra \$249 million in prescription drug costs if the proposed Canada-EU trade pact were ratified as-is. (See "EU trade deal threatens to inflate B.C. employer costs" – issue 1160; January 17-23.)

Economics professor **Aidan Hollis** from the **University of Calgary** and **Paul Grootendorst** – a director in the faculty of pharmacy at the **University of Toronto** – produced that study.

Dix said that the B.C. government has been quiet about this looming cost hike. "Adrian Dix is wrong," Bell said. "Our provincial trade negotiators have told the federal government that B.C. remains concerned that provincial health-care costs could be affected by higher drug prices that could occur as a result of increased patent protection."

A study by **E&B Data**, commissioned by the **Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association**, found in October that, if the proposed EU trade pact becomes law, it would extend branded-drug protection in Canada by an average of 3.5 years. That would force provincial governments to buy branded drugs instead of generic drugs in many cases.

The change would help the bottom lines at global branded drug producers, such as Germany's **Bayer AG**, Switzerland's **F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd.** and France's **Sanofi SA**.