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**LETTERS
POLICY**

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why should we back pharmacists in fight?

Re: Back our pharmacists in fight with province, letter to the editor by Diane Ward, May 22.

Provincial and federal guidelines specify generic drugs are to be identical to brand name drugs. However, the word identical is very much a legal interpretation and is not literal.

A life-threatening experience (in my family) occurred because a pharmacist decided to replace a brand name prescription with a generic without formally advising us.

It was realized after three months of weight and memory loss, along with seizures, that the brand name was arbitrarily replaced by a generic drug.

The druggist claimed unless the doctor's prescription indicates "no replacement", he is within his rights

to switch to generics. It took a month to return to normal once the brand name was re-introduced.

We should consider the following before pushing the Ontario government to reconsider eliminating rebates:

- Will pharmacists be adamant to push generics without the rebates?

- Why do doctors prescribe brand names rather than generics?

- How did pharmacists stay in business before generics and rebates were introduced? Why did doctors and pharmacists give advice on drug implications before generics were introduced?

Be careful what you ask for because the next thing will be to support pharmacists writing prescriptions.

Of course, it won't have anything to do with money but the free advice on what's right for the patient.

GARY SIMONDS
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE



Gulf oil spill has many lessons for Canada

It could never happen here. That was Prime Minister Stephen Harper's assurance in the wake of the massive oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, which he referred to as "an environmental catastrophe unlike anything we've seen in quite a long time".

The company behind the spill off the United States Gulf Coast, British Petroleum, has three licences to drill for oil in the Beaufort Sea in Canada's Arctic.

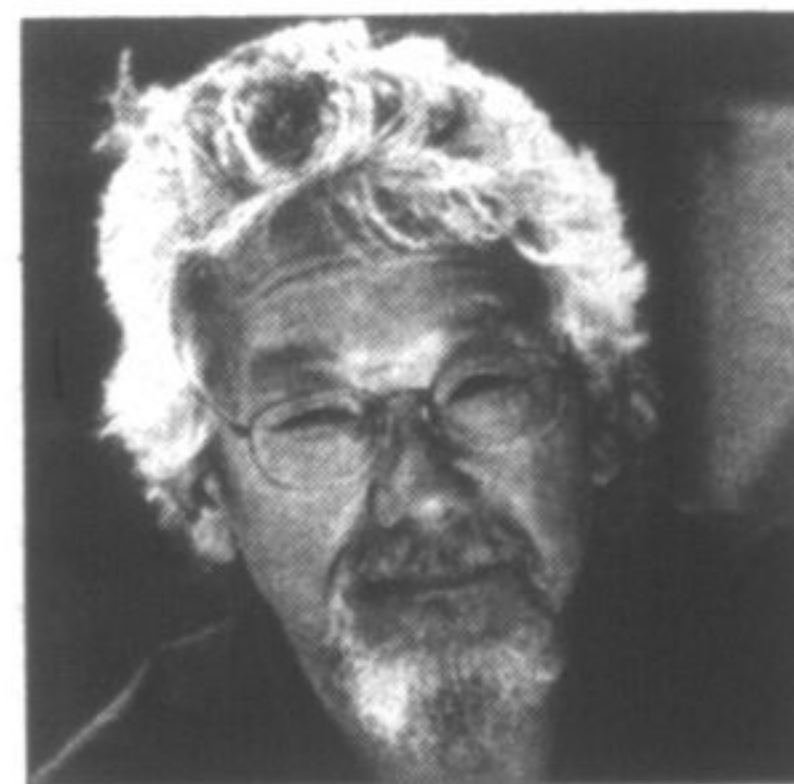
BP and other companies have asked our federal government to relax environmental regulations around Arctic drilling. And B.C. is still pushing to get the federal government to lift a moratorium on drilling off the West Coast.

There's also a plan in the works by Enbridge to build a pipeline to carry oil from the tar sands to the B.C. coast, where it will be put on oil tankers for ocean shipping.

Questions have also been raised about the safety of an offshore well Chevron has started drilling off the coast of Newfoundland. It will be deeper than the one in the Gulf of Mexico.

We've been assured many times that the technology is safe, but the Gulf disaster shows no technology is fool-proof. Can we really afford the risk?

U.S. President Barack Obama has halted plans for further oil drilling in



David Suzuki

with Faisal Moola

the Gulf until an investigation is completed (although, according to the Center for Biological Diversity, the U.S. has approved 27 other offshore drilling projects since the spill) and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has implemented a similar moratorium on drilling off that state's coast.

Canada, however, has no plans to halt East Coast or Arctic drilling and the B.C. government continues to push for drilling off the West Coast.

When a disaster of this magnitude occurs, we should stop to re-examine the state of our own programs that might have similar risks so we can find ways to avoid harming our oceans and coastal communities.

B.C.'s coast, which is known worldwide for its rich biodiversity and vibrant

tourism industry, is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of an oil spill.

A spill would be carried quickly by the nutrient-rich currents, possibly washing up on the mainland, Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii coasts. A spill or leak could threaten orcas, salmon, birds and many other plant and animal species, as well as devastating our fishing and tourism industries.

Is this the price we're willing to pay for a polluting and diminishing source of energy?

Oil may seem inexpensive compared to some forms of energy, but if you factor in the costs of these real and potential disasters, not to mention the everyday pollution, it's not such a bargain.

One surprising response to the spill comes from proponents of the Alberta tar sands who see the Gulf disaster as boon.

A cartoon in the Edmonton Journal pictured U.S. President Obama standing in the Gulf with oil on his hands, saying, "On second thought, the Alberta oilsands ain't so bad..."

The tar sands have been linked to ecological, social and medical problems, including toxic water pollution and excessive greenhouse gas emissions – and none of that is altered by the Gulf spill.

The disastrous consequences of ocean oil spills may be more immedi-

ately apparent, but land-based drilling can also cause environmental damage. Leaks, spills, blow-outs, fires and explosions are more common than many people realize.

A more thoughtful response to the spill would be to recognize the huge risks associated with the kind of energy we use and the way we get it.

Clearly, the negative costs of tar sands and deep ocean resources should point to the need to work toward a carbon-free energy future.

The problems are only going to get worse as we reach peak oil, when the most accessible sources of oil are all but gone and we must rely even more on the dirtier and harder-to-reach supplies in the deep ocean or tar sands.

We can't stop using fossil fuels immediately, but we should see this latest disaster as an opportunity to look at the costs of our energy use and where we should go from here.

Clearly we must wean ourselves from oil and gas as we make the transition to cleaner sources of energy. If we were wise, we would go more slowly with the resources we do have – in the tar sands, for example – and use the revenues to fund research and development of clean energy.

Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.