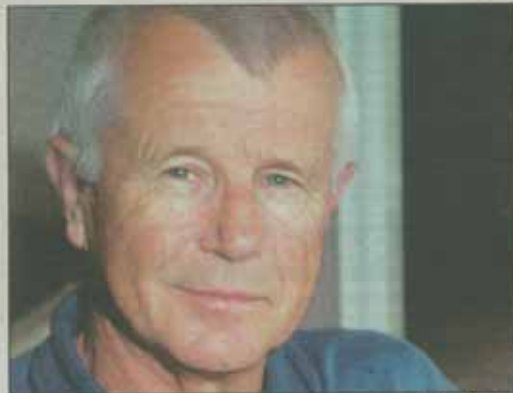


ONTARIO DENIED HIM CANCER DRUG

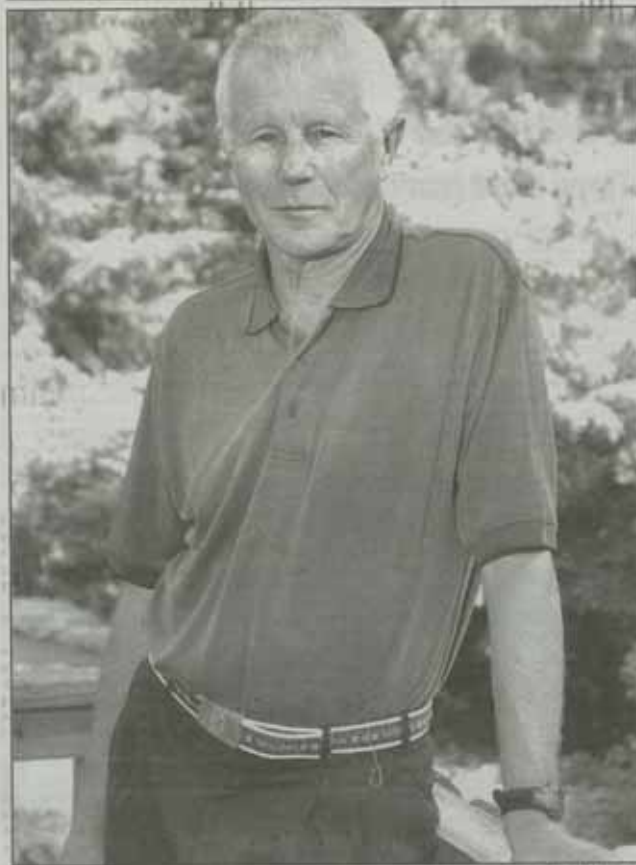


— Dave Abel, SUN
■ DOUG HENDERSON offered to pay \$12,000 for cancer drug Rituxan but was refused, even though it is used as a first-line treatment in B.C.

So T.O. man spent
\$50,000 to get
life-saving
treatment in U.S.

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WHY, PREMIER?



—Dave Abet, SUN

■ DOUG HENDERSON of Toronto didn't qualify for funding for cancer drug Rituxan — and the province wouldn't let him pay for it himself. So he took his money south.

He couldn't get cancer drug here

So he spent \$50Gs for treatment in the U.S.

ANTONELLA ARTUSO
Queen's Park Bureau Chief

A TORONTO man battling non-Hodgkin's lymphoma says he spent almost \$50,000 for a life-prolonging U.S. cancer treatment denied him in Ontario.

Doug Henderson, 64, a retired chemical industry executive, travelled to Indianapolis to receive Rituxan, a drug he learned about from his oncologist but for which he failed to meet the provincial criteria for funding.

Henderson said he asked to pay out of pocket for the drug here at a cost of about \$12,000.

"But I wasn't permitted to do that because it would be a two-tier (health care) system, apparently," he said.

Instead, Henderson flew to the U.S. where he spent \$24,000

U.S. on the same treatment plus accommodation and travel costs.

Henderson said the drug, in his case, was worth the expense.

"Within three days of the first treatment with it, I was reacting positively to it," he said. "A couple of weeks later, I was off booking a vacation in the Bahamas."

'First-line treatment'

Tory MPP Cam Jackson, who raised the issue in the legislature yesterday, said the drug is used in the U.S. and in B.C. as a "first-line" treatment for cancer, but patients in Ontario have to first undergo two bouts of chemotherapy, and be at least 60 years of age, to have the potential to qualify for coverage.

"The provincial government must remove the hard cap on

new cancer drugs with Cancer Care Ontario so they can make health decisions and save lives instead of budget decisions to make money," Jackson said.

Eva Lannon, a spokesman for Health Minister George Smitherman, wouldn't comment on a specific case but said all decisions on drug eligibility are made by CCO based on scientific evidence.

"There is no cap on it," she said. "We will work with Cancer Care Ontario to address their funding challenges, if they have any."

Dr. Brent Zanke, of Cancer Care Ontario, said Rituxan has been approved for broader use based on new scientific information.

CCO is working with the health ministry on an approved funding arrangement, he said.

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