



October 13, 2016

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Honourable Terry Lake
British Columbia Minister of Health
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RE: Improving health and healthcare in B.C. through wise public investment

Premier Clark and Minister Lake,

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres (CACHC) and counterparts within the British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres (BCACHC) we invite you to review important findings from the 2016 Canadian Survey of Community Health Centres at: www.cachc.ca/2016survey

Community Health Centres (CHCs) have been called “Medicare’s best kept secret”. They provide a triple bottom line solution: improved individual health, improved community and population health, and more cost-effective healthcare and social service systems.

CHCs are multi-sector health and healthcare organizations that operate through a comprehensive primary health care approach. Care teams at CHCs are comprised of family physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, counselors and other providers who wrap care around individual needs, ensuring the right care, by the right provider, at the right time. These care services are integrated with a range of health promotion programs, social services, and community health initiatives.

At a time when governments across Canada are looking to strengthen community infrastructure and provide transformative change through more cost-effective public services, we want to take this opportunity to re-introduce you to CHCs.

CHCs have been driving innovation in integrated health and social services across Canada ever since the first CHC (Mount Carmel Clinic) was established 90 years ago, in Winnipeg. They have the potential to address many of our country’s most urgent and intersecting priorities, and this holds true for British Columbia.

Results from the 2016 Canadian CHCs Survey affirm that CHCs work across multiple sectors (healthcare, seniors services, housing, immigration and settlement, and other sectors), converting our fragmented health and social systems...



The Canadian Association of Community Health Centres is the federal voice for Community Health Centres and community-oriented, people-centred primary health care across Canada.

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...into more accessible and navigable services for people at the local level. What's more, they engage members of the community in identifying evolving needs and priorities in the community.

Not only does this integrated, community-centred approach optimize the various public services upon which Canadians rely, it improves health outcomes and helps build social capital in diverse communities across Canada.

Despite the critical role played by CHCs, results from the 2016 CHCs Survey also paint an alarming picture about serious operational and capital pressures faced by CHCs across the country.

In British Columbia, 86% of existing CHCs report significant operational pressures impacting their ability to fulfill their mandate in serving residents of the province. And, only 8% of CHCs in B.C. currently receive core operational funding from the provincial government to deliver the integrated basket of primary care, health promotion and community health services that are CHCs are designed for. Moreover, most communities throughout B.C. still do not have access to a CHC.

CHCs can play an even more powerful role in helping the Government of British Columbia to fulfill its mandate in improving the health and wellbeing of B.C. residents. We sincerely call for your collaboration in stewarding this process.

The need to shift attention and public investment toward the integrated CHC approach is one that must be embraced by all provinces, as well as the federal government. That is why we are strongly encouraging the federal government and provinces to ensure that funding for CHCs is embedded in the forthcoming federal/provincial/territorial Health Accord.

The Health Accord provides a fresh opportunity to advance a shared commitment to transformative change in health and social services across Canada. We respectfully urge the Government of British Columbia to echo this call for dedicated funding to the provinces for CHCs.

We appreciate that the provinces/territories and federal government have already made some progress in outlining initial priorities for the forthcoming Health Accord: home care, mental health services, improved prescription drug care, and 'innovation', for instance. We believe strongly that concurrent investment in CHCs across Canada is essential in order to ensure that implementation of strategies in those areas results in services that are accessible and equitable for all, and that these services are connected to other sectors that impact health.



Over the coming months, our association and provincial counterparts, including the BCACHC, will be providing governments across the country with further analysis and recommendations on improving the health and wellbeing of Canadians through Community Health Centres.

In the meantime, we would be pleased to discuss the value and potential of CHCs with you and members of your Cabinet. We would also be very honoured to work with our British Columbia CHC network to arrange visits to existing CHCs throughout the province so that you may see firsthand how CHCs are already improving accessibility, quality and impact of public services for individuals, families and communities.

Respectfully yours,

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cc:

Hon. Michael de Jong - Minister of Finance & Government House Leader
Hon. Rich Coleman - Deputy Premier & Minister of Natural Gas Development & Minister Responsible for Housing
Hon. Stephanie Cadieux - Minister of Children & Family Development
Hon. Mike Bernier - Minister of Education
Hon. Shirley Bond - Minister of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training & Minister Responsible for Labour
Hon. Michelle Stilwell - Minister of Social Development & Social Innovation
Hon. Amrik Virk - Minister of Technology, Innovation & Citizens' Services
Hon. Todd Stone - Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure & Deputy House Leader
Rick MacDonald – Administrator, Pender Harbour and District Health Centre and Working Group Co-Lead, British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres
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