



**October 12, 2016**

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**The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.**  
**Prime Minister of Canada**  
**80 Wellington Street**  
**Ottawa, ON**  
**K1A 0A2**

**RE: Improving health and healthcare through wiser public investment**

Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres (CACHC) we invite you and members of your Cabinet to review important findings from the 2016 Canadian Survey of Community Health Centres at: [www.cachc.ca/2016survey](http://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 wide-range of health promotion programs, social services, and community health initiatives.

At a time when the federal government is looking to strengthen community infrastructure, to steward innovation and transformative change in healthcare, and to make high-impact investments in housing services, immigration/settlement services, and other 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 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.



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.

340 College Street, Suite 500  
Toronto, ON, M5T 3A9  
T: 416.922.5694  
F: 886.404.6040  
E: info@cachc.ca

www.cachc.ca  
Twitter: @CACHC\_ACCSC

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 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 the serious operational and capital pressures faced by CHCs across the country.

94% of CHCs report significant operational pressures impacting their ability to fulfill their mandate in serving residents of Canada. A large proportion of CHCs across Canada still do not receive core operational funding from provincial or federal governments. Moreover, the vast majority of Canadians still do not have access to a CHC at all within their community.

CHCs have the potential to deliver the sort of transformative change the federal government and Canadians alike desire. We urge the Government of Canada to invest in existing and new CHCs through its community infrastructure strategy, its *Better Future for Indigenous Peoples* strategy, and other federal programs under its jurisdiction.

We also strongly encourage the federal government to exercise its leadership role by ensuring that funding for CHCs is embedded in the forthcoming federal/provincial/territorial Health Accord.

As integrated care and support hubs, CHCs are key to ensuring that investment in priority areas being discussed thus far for the Health Accord – home care, mental health services, improved prescription drug care, and innovation – 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 will be providing governments at all levels 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 members of your Cabinet and staff. We would also be very honoured to arrange for visits to CHCs so that you and your representatives may see firsthand how CHCs are improving accessibility, quality and impact of public services in diverse communities across the country.

Respectfully yours,

**Irene Clarence**  
**Executive Director, Mid-Main CHC**  
**Chair, CACHC Board of Directors**  
**Vancouver, BC**

**Scott Wolfe**  
**Executive Director, CACHC**  
**Toronto, ON**  
[swolfe@cachc.ca](mailto:swolfe@cachc.ca)

CC:

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