

January 11, 2012

The Honourable Christy Clark  
Chair, The Council of the Federation  
Premier of British Columbia  
P.O. Box 9041, Station Provincial Government  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

The Honourable Darrell Dexter  
Vice-Chair, The Council of the Federation  
Premier of Nova Scotia  
P.O. Box 726  
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Subject: **Starting Where Health Begins: Strengthening the Place of Public Health in Canada**

Dear Premier Clark and Premier Dexter:

As the Council of the Federation prepares for its upcoming meeting, the *Canadian Network of Public Health Associations* (CNPHA) would like to draw the Council's attention to the importance of public health within a future federal/provincial/territorial fiscal arrangement for health care. The CNPHA is a pan-Canadian group of independent, not-for-profit, voluntary membership public health associations representing public health and the public health community at the provincial, territorial and national levels.

We are pleased with recent announcements by the provincial and territorial Premiers and Ministers of Health over the past 18 months emphasizing the importance of disease and injury prevention, health promotion and healthy living to improve the quality of life of Canadians. Last July's declaration by the Council of the Federation as well as the discussions and announcements from the federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Health meetings in the autumn of 2010 and again last November are important instruments to garner political, public and multi-sector support for action on priority public health issues facing our country's citizens.

Public health creates conditions in which people can be healthy. The cornerstones of public health are disease and injury prevention, health promotion and health protection. Indeed, the opportunity for Canadians to be healthy and productive starts long before they need medical care and treatment. To improve the capacity of Canadians to lead healthy, productive lives, we need to **start where health begins**: where we live, learn and work, and in our neighborhoods and communities. All Canadians should have equal opportunity to make choices and take action to live a long, healthy life regardless of their income, education, ethnicity, life circumstances or where they live. Over time, this will reduce the burden on our healthcare system, both in terms of patient load and wait times. By preventing injury and diseases that are expensive to treat, a strong, stable public health system can help mitigate soaring health care and societal costs in Canada.

The increase in life expectancy in Canada during the last century is largely attributable to public health interventions. A strong, stable public health system can play a quintessential role in strengthening the health of Canadians into the future by continuing to provide effective protection against communicable diseases; promoting physical activity, good eating habits and safe food, water and sanitation and housing in Canada; securing favorable conditions during childhood and adolescence for public health in the long term; ensuring adequate income, secure working conditions and safe environments and products for all Canadians.

The CNPHA presents the following recommendations to the Council of the Federation for consideration during next week's meeting. These changes represent a shift in focus from "health care" to "starting where health begins" as a guiding principle, and a commitment to investment in strategies that provide all Canadians the opportunity to make choices and take action that helps them live healthy, productive lives:

- **Build a healthier Canadian population:** Adopt and invest in a comprehensive "public health" component within provincial and territorial strategies and budgets. This should include investments in disease and injury prevention, health promotion, health protection, and pandemic preparedness and response;
- **Enable the evaluation of public health efforts:** Adopt strategies to monitor and evaluate whether these efforts and investments are enabling individuals and communities to improve their health and productivity across income, education, ethnic, and territorial categories;
- **Strong federal leadership:** Ask the federal government to play a lead role in facilitating and coordinating national efforts to put into place initiatives that support "starting where health begins". Examples of federal leadership would include, but not necessarily be limited to, the renewal of a strengthened National Immunization Strategy, an enhanced Federal Tobacco Control Strategy and a National Sodium Strategy to complement and reinforce provincial and territorial efforts;
- **Synergy:** Improve synergy between the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer to invest in non-health sector determinants of health; and,
- **Fund public health infrastructure:** Invest in the country's public health infrastructure (including human resources), especially at the local level.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these priority areas and our recommendations for achieving them. The point of contact for the CNPHA is Debra Lynkowski, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Public Health Association (613.725.3769, ext: 127, dlynkowski@cpha.ca).

We wish you a successful meeting and look forward to hearing about the outcomes of your work.

Sincerely,



Erica Di Ruggiero  
Chair  
Canadian Public Health Association



Marjorie MacDonald  
President  
Public Health Association  
of British Columbia



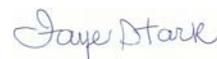
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President  
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cc: The Honourable Alison Redford, Premier of Alberta  
The Honourable Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan  
The Honourable Greg Selinger, Premier of Manitoba  
The Honourable Darrell Pasloski, Premier of Yukon and Minister of Finance, Yukon  
The Honourable Bob McLeod, Premier of the Northwest Territories  
The Honourable Eva Aariak, Premier of Nunavut  
The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario  
The Honourable Jean Charest, Premier of Québec  
The Honourable David Alward, Premier of New Brunswick  
The Honourable Robert Ghiz, Premier of Prince Edward Island  
The Honourable Kathy Dunderdale, Premier of Newfoundland & Labrador  
The Honourable Michael de Jong, Minister of Health, British Columbia  
The Honourable Ken Falcon, Minister of Finance, British Columbia  
The Honourable Fred Horne, Minister of Health and Wellness, Alberta  
The Honourable Ron Liepert, Minister of Finance, Alberta  
The Honourable Don Morris, Minister of Health, Saskatchewan  
The Honourable Ken Krawetz, Minister of Finance, Saskatchewan  
The Honourable Theresa Oswald, Minister of Health, Manitoba  
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The Honourable Doug Graham, Minister of Health and Social Services, Yukon  
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The Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Minister of Finance, Northwest Territories  
The Honourable Keith Peterson, Minister of Health and Social Services/Minister of Finance, Nunavut  
The Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Ontario  
The Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance, Ontario  
The Honourable Yves Bolduc, Minister of Health and Social Services, Québec  
The Honourable Raymond Bachand, Minister of Finance, Québec  
The Honourable Madeleine Dubé, Minister of Health, New Brunswick  
The Honourable Blaine Higgs, Minister of Finance, New Brunswick  
The Honourable Doug Currie, Minister of Health and Wellness, Prince Edward Island  
The Honourable Wesley J. Sheridan, Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs, Prince Edward Island  
The Honourable Maureen MacDonald, Minister of Health, Nova Scotia  
The Honourable Graham Steele, Minister of Finance, Nova Scotia  
The Honourable Susan Sullivan, Minister of Health and Community Services, Newfoundland & Labrador  
The Honourable Tom Marshall, Minister of Finance, Newfoundland & Labrador  
Loretta O'Connor, Executive Director, The Council of the Federation Secretariat