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December 2008

BCCPAC Representation Report

Submitted by: **Suzette Miller, Director**

Name of Event: BC HEALTHY LIVING ALLIANCE (BCHLA) on HEALTHY FUTURES for B.C. FAMILIES : A POLICY DISCUSSION

Date of Event: OCTOBER 02, 2008

Location of Event: Asia Pacific Hall ,Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 580 West Hastings Street , Vancouver, BC

Present:

Jean Blake – Chair , BC Healthy Living Alliance and Executive Director , Canadian Diabetes Association , Pacific

Honorable Mary Polak , Minister of Healthy Living and Sport

Dr. Sharon Manson Singer , President , Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)

Dr. Hillel Goelman , Director , Professor , UBC's Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology and Special Education

Cheeying Ho , Executive Director , Smart Growth BC

Dr. Jim Frankish , Professor and Director , Centre for Population Health Promotion , Research , UBC

Mary Collins , Director of the BC Healthy Living Alliance Secretariat

Barbara Kaminsky , CEO , Canadian Cancer Society , BC and Yukon

Virginia Greene , President and CEO , Business Council of BC

Robert Hobson , President of the Union of BC Municipalities

Michelle DeGroot , Director , Policy and Advocacy , First Nations Health Council

Faye Wightman , President and CEO , Vancouver Foundation

Dr. Trevor Hancock , Public Health Consultant , Ministry of Health

Ted Bruce , Vancouver Coastal Health (replaced Bobbe Wood , Chair Elect , BCHLA , President and CEO , Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon , due to illness).

Over 100 representatives from different organizations /agencies and sponsors.

HEALTHY FUTURES for BC FAMILIES

British Columbians are among the healthiest people in the world. BC is the leader in health promotion and disease prevention and has the lowest rates of smoking and obesity and the highest rates of physical activity of any Canadian province. However, on the short and longer term projections , BC and Canada are falling behind other world leaders in health status. The recent creation of the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport following the success of ActNow BC has been an important step forward . The World Health Organization has recognized the model of ActNow BC as an exemplary approach , one that should be considered by other jurisdictions.

However, there are still significant challenges ahead if BC is to achieve the goal of being the healthiest jurisdiction to have ever hosted a Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games and then to extend this legacy beyond 2010.

This is because despite our excellent average , there is still a large gap between the healthiest British Columbians and those who suffer from ill health. The social determinants of health must be addressed because of their significant impact on chronic disease and health inequities.

THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS of HEALTH

Access to income , affordable housing , healthy food , education , early childhood development , and recreational opportunities influence our ability to make healthy choices and ultimately the state of our physical and mental health as well as life expectancy. These must be addressed due to their significant impact on health.

HEALTH INEQUITIES and CHRONIC DISEASE

Health inequities are most pronounced among children and families living in poverty , the working poor , the unemployed / under-employed , those with limited education and/or low literacy, First Nations people , new immigrants , people suffering from social exclusion , the homeless and people with addictions and/or mental illness.

Disadvantaged British Columbians have increased susceptibility to a broad range of chronic conditions and are more likely to be living with chronic illness. For example ,the rate of diabetes among those with low incomes is double those with high incomes and for heart disease , it is almost double.

WHY FOCUS on CHILDREN

The primary target of investments should be children since they are the most vulnerable to the effects of material and social deprivation. Positive conditions during childhood not only support child health but have long lasting effects on health and the development of disease during adulthood.

BCHLA has identified the following priorities and actions that if addressed , will increase the health of BC children and families.

All children in BC from birth to five years of age have access to comprehensive early child development and care with all levels of government contributing by a) Extending parental leave benefits to cover the period of birth to 18 months. b) Provide comprehensive ,quality and affordable early childhood development and parenting services and programs. c) Coordinate the identification of learning and developmental disorders . Also work with parents to ensure appropriate remedies as early as possible. d) Reinvest in the Child Care Subsidy Program to provide incentives to the creation of quality child care spaces.

1. All British Columbian youth are able to access and successfully complete educational programs to the highest level possible , especially those from the most advantaged backgrounds by a) Commit and fund additional human resources to support the early identification of potential drop-outs. b) Integrate the delivery of child and youth assessment and support services to address substance abuse , teen pregnancy and young parenthood ,suicide prevention, counselling and other mental and physical issues into schools. c) Increase support for low income students to pursue post- secondary education and vocational training through BC Grant and BC Loan Reduction Program.

2. All British Columbians to have sufficient income to provide a healthy life for their children and families by a) Raising minimum wage to a level that allows families to purchase healthy foods , secure decent housing and pursue recreational opportunities. b) Structure marginal tax rates and benefits so that low wage earners are not penalized for working rather than relying on income assistance. c) Increase the National Child Tax Benefit and Supplement .

3. All British Columbians have access to safe , affordable housing.
   89 % of British Columbians support increasing investments in affordable housing , supportive housing , social housing ,emergency and transition housing. The Income Assistance shelter rates need to be adjusted based on reasonable market rental costs. Adequate follow-up support and housing need to be provided for those leaving institutional care.

4. All British Columbians to have access to a healthy , sustainable and safe food supply.
   This can be achieved by supporting initiatives that increase supplies of healthy , sustainable and safe food for all. The Income Assistance support rates as well as people on disability and fixed income should be adjusted to account for the actual cost of healthy food.

5. All British Columbians can live in safe , healthy and supportive communities.
   How communities are planned and built can impact the health outcomes of the citizens who live there and their ability to make healthy choices. Resources for communities must be provided according to age-friendly guidelines and remove barriers to health , social services and healthy living programs for new immigrants , low income families and First Nations people.

CONCLUSION :

At the end of the full day discussion, the participants voted and agreed that all the Social Determinants of Health are equally important and must be addressed simultaneously and vowed to work together to advance the goals/policies and actions .

Please note that contents of this report came from the BC Healthy Living Alliance's Discussion Paper in Draft Form dated September 2008 .