

# Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC)

Newsletter - Spring 2009



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## ***President's Report***

As you will see from the reports below, PHABC is taking considerable leadership in the collective effort to reduce health inequities. We are doing this through our capacity building work and advocacy initiatives. As President, I was asked to Chair the press conference at which the Poverty Reduction Committee released its strategy and I also facilitated two forums on the social determinants of health sponsored by the BC Healthy Living Alliance, one of our partners in this effort. While the election period is an opportunity to gain momentum on this issue, health inequities will require concerted action over a number of years and PHABC and its membership will continue to be at the forefront of this work.

I am also pleased to report that the number of members actively participating on Association Committees is rising significantly. Even before a recent call for members to join our Committees, we were seeing a renewed interest in member participation. The membership involvement greatly enhances the Association's capacity to pursue its agenda and represent the public health community. So don't be shy about stepping up and contributing to the momentum to build the new public health for the 21 century. Feel free to contact me directly if you are interested.

As part of our on-going sustainability planning for the Association, the Board has identified some key priorities to pursue. Central to this is our effort to build our website as a principal gateway for the public health community. You will see in this newsletter a brief report on the redesign we are undertaking to improve navigation on the site. If you visit the site you will also see that we have become a gateway and host for public health strategic initiatives lead by other organizations such as the Ministry of Health's Core Functions work and the Health Officers Council effort on health inequities. We have introduced a group membership fee to facilitate groups that wish to create more linkage with PHABC. And we continue to offer the web-based communications platform for groups to use as a vehicle for dialogue within their individual professional community. All of these efforts are being re-evaluated and we are in discussions with several groups to expand our support for a unified voice. I expect that I will be able to report on more developments on this front in the coming months.

Public health practice in British Columbia makes a difference everyday but there is a huge potential to do more. Through capacity building, advocacy, research and network building, PHABC will continue to make its contribution.

**Ted Bruce**  
**President, Public Health Association of BC**

### ***PHABC Website Update***

PHABC continues to redesign our Home page and navigation system in an effort to build and consolidate a network for public health across the province. PHABC's online audience continues to grow and now averages over 100,000 page views per month. The previous newsletter discussed some important improvements to the site navigation system including:

1. PHABC "At A Glance" which contains information about PHABC and can be viewed without navigating away from the Home page.
2. The "Top Menu" which contains the Main Menu and other important pages.
3. The "Quick Links" menu on the left hand margin which will allow users to navigate to the most popular modules and sub sites.
4. The right margin of the website now has a link for visitors to join the Public Health Association as well as additional links to register for important PHABC and partner activities.

In the coming months PHABC will be focussing on improving the design of the Home page and is currently developing two additional sub sites that will be added to the Home page. Members are encouraged to stay tuned for upcoming announcements.

PHABC will continue to endeavour to improve the site with your support. If you have comments or suggestions on ways to improve the site your feedback is always welcome at: [execdir@phabc.org](mailto:execdir@phabc.org).

### ***PHABC Project Updates***

#### **Core and Technical Competencies for Public Health in BC**

The Core and Technical Competencies for Public Health in BC will contribute to ensuring that the public health workforce has the right mix of people equipped with the right mix of competencies, in the right place and at the right time for the effective and efficient delivery of public health in BC. The project is a partnership between the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC), the BC Academic Health Council, the BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). PHABC is managing the project, with funding from the PHAC and the BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport.

Phase I (Needs Assessment) was recently completed and identified the core and technical competencies most critical to implementing the BC Ministry of Health [Framework for Core Functions in Public Health](#) and existing competency gaps.

View the [final report](#) and [technical document](#).

Phase II will focus on processes to address the identified gaps in competency profiles and developing tools for education and workforce planning.

### **Healthy Foods Initiative: Farm to School Project**

PHABC's Farm to School program funded through the BC Healthy Living Alliance aims to prevent childhood obesity through improved local food security. This means increasing access to fresh, locally-grown, nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods in a sample of BC schools. Sixteen schools are operational and more than 3,000 school aged children residing in communities from Fernie to Fort St. John will have the opportunity to access fresh local fruits and vegetables on school premises.

For more information please visit the farm to school website at [www.phabc.org/farmtoschool](http://www.phabc.org/farmtoschool).

### ***Policy, Advocacy, and Research***

British Columbia has the highest wealth gap of any province and the highest degree of income inequality in Canada. Based on the 2006 Census, 13% of British Columbians are living in poverty, including a child poverty rate (21.9%) that has been the highest in Canada for five years. Research tells us that people living in lower income situations have consistently poorer health outcomes. Lower income and limited resources are equated with decreased life expectancy and an increased chance of having a health issue such as a chronic disease.

Addressing these social and health inequities are a priority for the PHABC and were documented in a 2008 PHABC Resolution:

(<http://www.phabc.org/modules.php?name=Contentpub&pa=showpage&pid=88>).

The Public Health Association of BC has also been working with a broad coalition of organizations, businesses and community groups calling on all BC political parties to create a provincial poverty reduction plan. As a member of BC's public health community, I would encourage you to ask your candidates about this issue. For your information, we have created a poverty reduction information sheet with questions that you could ask your candidate. This is available at: [http://www.phabc.org/files/headlines/PHABC\\_PovertyReduction\\_April2009.pdf](http://www.phabc.org/files/headlines/PHABC_PovertyReduction_April2009.pdf)

Daryl Quantz  
Chair, Policy, Advocacy, and Research

### ***Capacity-Building Committee***

Since the last newsletter, the Capacity-Building Committee has established two main sub-committees: a Spring Workshop Committee and a Fall Conference Committee. The Workshop will take place on **May 6**, with several video conference sites across the province. Speakers will include Dr. Cory Neudorf, Chair of the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) Board, Dr. John Millar, Director of Population Health, Provincial Health Service Authority (PHSA) and Joanne Bays, Project Manager Farm to School Salad Bar initiative. Additional speakers will be added to describe other initiatives to address health inequities from across the province.

The Conference, which will take place on **November 23 and 24** at the Plaza 500 Hotel in Vancouver, is in the process of confirming keynote speakers. The speakers will address action on health inequities from several perspectives including, government, different sectors, other jurisdictions and media. There will also be concurrent sessions, poster sessions, a public forum as well as the Annual General Meeting of PHABC. The deadline for abstract submissions is **May 15** and I would encourage you to make a submission if you have not done so already.

The overall Capacity-Building Committee has added several new members as a result of a solicitation for new members and will be providing oversight and guidance for all of the capacity-building efforts of the Association. I urge you to take advantage of all such efforts and to contribute your talents to building the capacity of public health in British Columbia.

Irving Rootman  
Chair, Capacity-Building Committee

### ***Membership Committee***

The Membership Committee is focusing its efforts this year on reviewing the membership and renewal processes for the members who joined PHABC through the Unified Voice project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada in 2005. This project is currently in process. If you would like to assist in this project or other PHABC membership activities please contact Barbara Crocker ([barbara.crocker @ vch.ca](mailto:barbara.crocker@vch.ca)) or Maureen Rowlands ([mrowlands @ hsf.bc.ca](mailto:mrowlands@hsf.bc.ca)).

### ***About the Public Health Association of BC***

The mission of PHABC is to preserve and promote the public's health through disease and injury prevention, health promotion, health protection and healthy public policy. For information on PHABC and public health developments and resources go to the web at <http://www.phabc.org>.