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PRESS RELEASE

Public Health Association of BC Responds to World Health Organization Report on Social Determinants

On August 28, 2008 the World Health Organization's (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants released their final report. The Commission was established in 2005 to marshal evidence and make recommendations on reducing health inequities. The Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) calls on the Government of BC to respond to the WHO's report by acting locally on the important approaches advocated by this international panel of experts.

"There is clearly a growing consensus worldwide that further improvements in the health of the population require actions outside the health care sector. Housing, income security and the environment require a greater sense of urgency and more extensive intervention by all sectors of society" said Ted Bruce, President of PHABC.

PHABC acknowledges that the Government of BC has already recognized the need to act on determinants of health such as housing. PHABC encourages the Government to increase our efforts to build an equitable, healthier society. In recent months, there have been many concrete proposals put forward by the public health community in BC. These include:

- expanded support for early childhood development by improving the availability and quality of child care for all families;
- setting provincial targets for poverty reduction;
- increasing minimum wages and income assistance for people living in poverty;
- further expanding supportive housing, and;
- developing the physical environment in communities in ways that support healthy living.

"One does not have to look far to see that we have serious health issues within certain groups that are the direct result of social inequality and related social factors" said Bruce. PHABC also strongly endorses the recent report by Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. David Butler-Jones that calls for immediate action to address the social determinants of health. These two high profile reports demonstrate that there is good evidence for many policies and programs that only need political will to make a huge difference in population health.

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PHABC is a nonprofit organization representing public health practitioners in BC. As well as advocacy on public health issues and public health workforce development, the Association initiates or supports a variety of projects to improve public health.

The report can be viewed at the following link:

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/final_report/en/index.html

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