



Public Health Association of British Columbia
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February 14, 2008

The Hon. Tony Clement, Minister of Health
Minister's Office - Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer
Public Health Agency of Canada
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Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

To: Honorable Tony Clement, Minister of Health

To: Dr. David Butler-Jones

I am writing to you as the President of the Public Health Association of BC concerning the decision to terminate funding for the Canadian Health Network. The importance of a health resource portal is generally recognized by most health organizations as an essential feature of a modern health care system. The Canadian Health Network provides both important information for self-care management and an opportunity to increase the health literacy of Canadians. A recent study by the Canadian Council on Learning concluded that 54% of British Columbians have a low level of health literacy. Low health literacy levels directly impact the health of individuals and may disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. An easily available, reliable and well-recognized source of health information is a key component of any strategy to improve health literacy.

While I appreciate that there are always funding challenges, it is tools and resources such as the Canadian Health Network that will make the health care system sustainable into the future and make a direct contribution to improving the health of the public. Before ending this program, the Public Health Agency of Canada should set out a clear alternative plan to meet the goals and objectives of the Canadian Health Network. I would also encourage PHAC to ensure that there is meaningful input from the public health community in designing a portal for the future. It would indeed be unfortunate to lose this resource at a time when the importance of empowering the public and increasing health literacy are paramount considerations for public health.

I hope that there is an opportunity to re-consider this decision. I would also appreciate any information on any proposed alternate plans that Health Canada or PHAC has to replace this resource.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted Bruce". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ted Bruce
President

cc: PHABC Board