



URBAN PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK
RÉSEAU CANADIEN POUR LA SANTÉ URBAINE

March 15, 2011

SECRETARIAT

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Mr. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister
House of Commons
111 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Canada

Dear Mr. Harper:

RE: “Healthy, Productive Canada: a Determinants of Health Approach”, a June 2009 final report from the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, subcommittee on Population Health

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I am writing on behalf of the Urban Public Health Network (UPHN), which is comprised of the Medical Officers of Health from the large urban public health units across Canada. This group represents members that have extensive experience in the field of population health, ranging from areas of governance, the use of health data and linking databases on determinants of health, as well as intersectoral action to build healthy communities. As senior physician leaders from urban centres across Canada, we urge you to implement the recommendations in the above Senate report from June 2009.

As the local public health leaders with experience in working with local business leaders, non-government organizations and human service providers in urban communities to address health inequities and promote population health, the UPHN members whole-heartedly agree with the report's recognition that local and neighbourhood level action is needed to address the major determinants of health (e.g. reducing rates of poverty, improving education and employment, improving social inclusion and early childhood development, etc).

At the same time, local action requires federal and provincial leadership and support to be successful. Many of the policy levers to impact determinants, such as housing, employment, and food security, require intersectoral connections that must begin with an all of government approach as called for in the Senate report. A strong federal example of uniting Cabinet around a Health In All Policies approach with renewed support for population health goals in Canada would be a major step forward. We agree with the findings in the report which outline that those countries that have taken this “joined up policies” approach with a focus on making tangible progress toward goals in improving population health or reducing poverty have been the most successful.

The senate report reiterates evidence that substantial federal and provincial investment in health care costs have a limited ability to achieve the healthy country and strong economy that Canadians desire compared to the investments in the underlying determinants of health. Increasingly, the business sector is recognizing that improving the determinants of health is good for the economy and their bottom line. Support and discourse is occurring from the level of the Conference Board of Canada through to local business leaders. We, as lead Medical Officers of Health in Canada's largest cities are ready to support the Government of Canada in acting on the determinants of health, which will move Canada further towards this preferred future where all Canadians are able to achieve their potential and contribute to a strong country. The UPHN is ready to link local actions to the federal strategy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Predy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

G. Predy, MD, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and
Chair, Urban Public Health Network

cc: Senator Art Eggleton, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on
Social Affairs, Science and Technology, Subcommittee on Cities