
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

DATES SET FOR CONVERSATION ON HEALTH PUBLIC FORUMS

VICTORIA – The first two of 16 regional Conversation on Health forums will kick off in Kamloops and Surrey in February 2007, announced Health Minister George Abbott today, as the provincial government released information on all the regional public forum dates.

“Thousands of British Columbians have already submitted many innovative and sound ideas to address challenges in the health system through e-mail, phone line and website,” said Abbott. “Government looks forward to meeting directly with British Columbians at all 16 public forums to hear their values, ideas and solutions so we can improve our health system for today and future generations.”

The regional public forums start in Kamloops on Feb. 3 and will conclude in Vancouver on July 7. Meetings with health professionals and other interested organizations to gather their input as both providers and consumers of health care will also be held in these communities.

Regional public forums and professional meetings are key components of gathering input to help government make health system enhancements. Pre-registration to attend a forum or a professional meeting is required as participants will be called in advance to confirm attendance. Public forum participants will also receive an advance package of materials to help prepare for discussions.

The Conversation is a year-long initiative to gather input from British Columbians to help strengthen B.C.’s health system, within the framework of the Canada Health Act. The input received from the Conversation on Health will provide the framework for improvements that will be presented to the Province in the fall of 2007.

On Dec. 19, government appointed a new parliamentary secretary for the Conversation on Health. Over the next year, Langley MLA Mary Polak will be working to support Minister Abbott in the ongoing work for this project, and to promote this opportunity with British Columbians around the province.

“For every British Columbian who has ever thought, ‘If I was running health care...,’ here’s their chance,” said Polak. “Their ideas, concerns and solutions; we want to hear it all.”

In addition to the regional forums, there are five other ways British Columbians can join the Conversation on Health:

- Website – www.BCConversationonHealth.ca
- Call the toll-free Conversation on Health line at 1-866-884-2055, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (translation is available in 130 languages)
- E-mail – conversationonhealth@victoria1.gov.bc.ca
- Letter – Ministry of Health, 5-3, 1515 Blanshard St., Victoria B.C. V8W 3C8, or
- Contact the local MLA.

Since September, the Conversation website has received over 32,000 visits; about 4,200 people have registered for the public forums and professional meetings; and over 7,000 people have called in or sent written submissions. Weekly reports with summaries and statistics of input can be found on the Conversation website.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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