

**Canadian Public Health Association
Ron Draper Health Promotion Award for ActNow BC
Minister of Health George Abbott
May 31, 2006**

Check against delivery

Good morning and a warm welcome to you all. I'd like to bring greetings to you from the Premier, Gordon Campbell, and from all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly here in British Columbia.

We're pleased to have the city of Vancouver host the Canadian Public Health Association's 97th annual conference. And we're delighted to have such a highly talented group of health professionals gather together representing a number of leading health organizations. We know you are leaders in your field and are working towards a common goal for Canadians: promoting health, preventing death, disease and disability and extending healthy life expectancy.

Healthy living is one of B.C.'s five great goals for a golden decade. Government's other goals support health, including:

- Making B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent;
- Building the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors;
- Leading the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality;
- And creating more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.

On behalf of the province of British Columbia, it gives me great pleasure to accept the Ron Draper Health Promotion Award for our provincial health promotion initiative, ActNow BC.

ActNow BC is an integrated, partnership-based, health promotion and chronic disease prevention strategy. It is unique in the world because it has set government-wide goals and each Ministry has a set target to achieve. We have recognized the importance of collaborating together to successfully create cohesive healthy living policies.

This will help government meet its goal of making British Columbia the leader in North America in healthy living and physical activity – and the healthiest jurisdiction to ever host the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Our targets are aggressive. By 2010, we have committed to:

- Reduce tobacco use by a further 10 per cent;
- Reduce obesity by 20 per cent;
- Increase the percentage of the population that is physically active by 20 per cent;
- Increase the percentage of adults who eat the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables by 20 per cent;
- And increase the number of women counseled about the dangers of alcohol use during pregnancy by 50 per cent.

Our targets are aggressive, but attainable. We will meet them, not on our own, but through more than 70 partnerships – partnerships within the provincial government and among the different levels of government. And we will meet them through partnerships with communities, schools and the private sector.

We have key partners in 2010 Legacies Now, and the BC Healthy Living Alliance, which includes:

- BC Recreation and Parks Association;
- Union of B.C. Municipalities;
- Heart & Stroke Assoc. of B.C. & Yukon;
- Canadian Cancer Society, BC & Yukon Div.;
- Canadian Diabetes Assoc., Pacific Div.;
- B.C. Lung Association;
- B.C. Pediatrics Society;
- Dietitians of Canada, B.C. Region and
- Public Health Association of B.C.

Investment of \$30 million to the BC Healthy Living Alliance, 2010 Legacies now and the Union of BC Municipalities are helping these partners take our message to the people of B.C. This will help create the supports they need to make healthy choices the easy choices.

We are extremely proud of this collaborative effort and of the work and commitment of all our partners. Over the course of the past few days, delegates will have had an opportunity to exchange knowledge, showcase innovative research and profile strategies for building capacity; in effect, work at renewing public health knowledge.

As you've heard earlier from Dr. Perry Kendall, our Provincial Health Officer, the Ministry of Health is working on reviewing and renewing its public health services. Our government has dedicated \$100 million for public health initiatives including Act Now BC, immunization programs, water and food security and health emergency management.

The directional document *A Framework for Core Functions in Public Health* is part of this public health renewal to support our valuable public health service delivery system. To modernize legislation supports for public health we have recently developed a *Drinking Water Act* and *Food Safety Act* and are working on developing a new *Public Health Act*. In addition, changes to the *Tobacco Sales Act* will improve compliance and help prevent youth access to tobacco products. These all help to strengthen public health across the province.

Surveillance for emerging infectious diseases is a critical component of public health. In B.C., we have been successful with our public health measures and surveillance. Much of that is thanks to the BC Centre for Disease Control, which is instrumental in tracking and anticipating emerging diseases.

With B.C.'s Pacific Rim location and our trans-Pacific connections, we are in a unique position to enhance surveillance efforts for emerging diseases. Our Centre for Disease Control already links to national and international organizations through its close work with the Atlanta CDC, the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada.

We are partners in the federal/provincial/territorial Network for Emergency Preparedness and Response, which has been working to integrate public health practices into a national emergency management system. And we are taking the lead for Canada in the development of an infectious disease surveillance and outbreak management, for which the Canadian government has earmarked \$100 million.

This work will not only help us prepare for a pandemic influenza outbreak, but will help to strengthen our public health surveillance system to monitor for all infectious diseases. It will not only help to save lives, but perhaps as importantly, we might also be able to avert some of the predicted adverse economic effects that we've seen in the past when infectious disease outbreaks occur.

Health Improvement and Preventing Disease, Injury and Disability are two core programs government has focused upon. In B.C., we are fortunate to have many champions who work tirelessly to reduce falls and the impact of fall-related injuries.

Among B.C. seniors, unintentional injuries are a major public health problem involving serious consequences to seniors. I'm pleased to say that there has been a significant decrease in death and hospitalization rates in B.C. from fall-related injuries among seniors. There has been a 12 percent decline in the rates of seniors' deaths from fall related injuries between 2000 and 2004, compared to the period between 1997 and 2001.

The work being done in B.C. on falls prevention is receiving international attention. Health authorities have integrated robust fall prevention programs within existing health service delivery planning.

Within this framework, a very practical and innovative idea is the Falls Prevention Training for Community Health Workers. These are the people that go into senior's homes and help them with their basic needs – their bathing, care for their homes and preparation of meals – these are seniors who have a high risk of falling.

Dr. Vicky Scott, Senior Advisor on Falls and Injury Prevention, BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit, has recently been awarded *The Patient Falls Research Award* from the Department of Veterans Affairs in Florida. This award recognized Vicky for her contribution around patient safety regarding falls prevention. In addition to this award, the B.C. Injury Research and Prevention Unit has been awarded a grant to develop a national curriculum for fall prevention training.

We know we have more work to do to create the kind of public health system that we envision. We know we can't put changes in place overnight. This government is working with health authorities, engaging in consultation and developing a series of evidence papers for each core program.

We need a strong public health infrastructure at all levels working with other sectors to implement effective healthy public policies and community programs. It is this government's vision that ActNow BC will be a longstanding public health program that promotes wellness, reduces the burden of disease, disability and injury and improves the overall health and well-being of every British Columbian.

Thank you.