



BC Healthy Living Alliance

working together to promote wellness and prevent chronic disease

BCHLA'S Healthy Families Agenda



THE  LUNG ASSOCIATION™
British Columbia



 Canadian
Cancer
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BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON

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UNION OF
BRITISH
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MUNICIPALITIES

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Who We Are

Formed in February 2003, the BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA) is a group of organizations that have come together to address the risk factors and health inequities that contribute significantly to chronic disease through leadership and collaboration.

Our vision is for a healthy British Columbia. Collectively, BCHLA members capture the attention of over 40,000 volunteers, 4,300 health and recreation professionals, and 184 local governments across British Columbia.

The BC Healthy Living Alliance includes:

Voting Members:

- [BC Lung Association](#)
- [BC Pediatric Society](#)
- [BC Recreation and Parks Association](#)
- [Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon Division](#)
- [Canadian Diabetes Association, BC Region](#)
- [Dietitians of Canada, BC Region](#)
- [Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon](#)
- [Public Health Association of BC](#)
- [Union of BC Municipalities](#)

And:

- BC's Health Authorities, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Ministry of Health are non-voting members of BCHLA's Coordinating Committee;
- BCHLA's network: comprised of 25 other provincial and regional non-profit organizations that endorse BCHLA's mission and goals.



Creating Healthier Communities and Families



Message from BCHLA

Everyone has a stake in creating healthier communities and families.

The BC Healthy Living Alliance supports health-promoting policies, environments, programs and services so that British Columbian families have opportunities to be healthy.

We have outlined four components that together comprise BCHLA's Healthy Families Agenda, they include:

- Creating connected, vibrant communities;
- Making it easier for families to be healthy;
- Empowering people;
- Making it work, working together

In order to maintain British Columbia's lead position in healthy living, a whole of society approach is essential. Leadership is required from all sectors and all levels of government. Each component within this document describes specific actions that are required for BC's continued success.

BCHLA is committed to working together with the BC government and many other partners across the province to build a healthier future for BC families.

Sincerely,

Barbara Kaminsky
Chair, BC Healthy Living Alliance, and
CEO, Canadian Cancer Society, BC & Yukon Division

Mary Collins
Director, BC Healthy Living Alliance Secretariat

Creating Connected, Vibrant Communities



1. Creating Connected, Vibrant Communities

Smart planning and modern infrastructure breathe life into our cities and towns and make them more attractive places to live, work and invest.

Supportive Environments

Density, affordability, connectivity and the relative mix of land uses within a neighbourhood determine whether a community promotes health or hinders it.

- Provide resources for communities to audit and design or retro-fit their communities according to age friendly guidelines.
- Invest in active transportation, 7% of all infrastructure funding allocated to urban transit, road and other transportation construction should be set aside for active transportation (e.g. bicycle facilities, walking trails/paths, sidewalks, signals, signage and traffic calming measures).
- Invest in the renewal of aging recreation, parks and sports facilities to ensure a sufficient and appropriate stock exists to support the healthy living needs of the population.

Housing

Our communities are healthier and safer when everyone has a home that fits their income and life circumstances.

- Create a youth homelessness prevention strategy to eliminate youth homelessness including the creation of affordable, supportive housing options for at-risk and homeless youth.
- Develop a long-term, consolidated, interagency Supported Housing System for hard to house individuals, including those with mental health problems and/or addictions.
- Ensure that emergency, transition and affordable housing meet the needs of specific populations including women and children fleeing violence, families and those with mental health problems and/or addictions.
- Adjust Income Assistance shelter rates so they are based on reasonable market rental costs.

Local Food

The availability of affordable, healthy local food makes a difference to our individual health, the resilience of our communities and the integrity of our environment.

- Ensure all lands with the highest capability of agricultural production are captured within the Agricultural Land Reserve and are used for what they were intended.
- Provide incentives to encourage local agricultural production and marketing (e.g. family farms, community gardens, farmers markets, BuyBC program).
- Coordinate actions to improve access to healthy food and food skills in rural and remote communities.



Making it Easier for Families to be Healthy

2. Making it Easier for Families to be Healthy

Families want their loved ones to be healthy - but they need help so that it is easier to make healthy choices. Access, education and skills are three major components that support a shift to healthier living.

Early Childhood Development

A child's early experiences and development establish a foundation that will impact school readiness, educational achievement and high school completion which ultimately contribute to employment, income security and health.

Quality childcare provides early learning opportunities while allowing parents to pursue employment or education and training, which is good for families and the economy.

- Reinvest in childcare capital and operation funding to provide incentives for the creation of more quality childcare spaces.
- Increase training spaces and remuneration for early child educators and childcare workers, providing incentives for people to pursue, stay and value these careers and reduce turn-over.
- Provide comprehensive, quality and affordable early childhood development, parenting, pre-natal health and family wellness services and programs ensuring that priority is given to those neighbourhoods and communities with the highest numbers of vulnerable children. Universal childcare delivered by early childhood educators should be considered as the ultimate goal.
- Provide affordable pre- and after-school programs for all children from the age of four with appropriate hours to meet the needs of working parents.
- Prorate charges according to family income ensuring that fees are very small or waived for low income families.

Healthy Schools

Our children spend an average of 30 to 50 hours per week in school. Schools are a central community hub in the lives of children and should be places that encourage and support healthy behaviours.

- Introduce healthy living curriculum into schools which would encompass: physical education; food system knowledge, including differentiating between healthy and unhealthy food and beverages; food preparation skills; screen time reduction; and ensuring that students receive at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity.
- Consider active transportation when siting new schools and in existing schools - both in terms of facilities that create safe routes and education that encourages walking and cycling.

Making it Easier for Families to be Healthy



Tobacco Reduction

Smoking is the single largest risk factor for chronic disease and premature death. Families need assistance in smoking prevention, quit support and to live free of second-hand smoke.

- Make youth related films with tobacco imagery ineligible for provincial film subsidies.
- Provincial ratings should make tobacco imagery a criteria for 18A classification, with the exception of depictions of historical figures and unambiguous depictions of the dire health consequences of tobacco use.
- Ban the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies.
- Provide 'quit support' to those with the highest risk of tobacco addiction.
- Work with BC Housing and the private sector to expand Smoke-free Housing.

Restaurant Labelling

When eating out, families need information in order to know whether they are ordering a nutritionally balanced meal or having that occasional indulgence. By labeling menu items with the fat, sugar, sodium and calorie content, families will have an easier means by which to choose the healthier option.

- Increase information on healthy options by requiring nutritional labeling on the menus of large-scale restaurant chains.

Junk Food Tax

Numerous studies link junk foods and sugary drinks to excess weight gain in both children and adults. We should look at ways to limit overconsumption such as through additional taxation, so our children aren't burdened with the heavy costs of obesity and chronic disease.

- Discourage unhealthy choices by applying taxes to food and drinks high in sugar, salt and fat that have minimal nutritional value. The tax should be high enough to reduce consumption and incorporated into the shelf price of the product rather than as a sales tax that is applied at the register.

Ban Marketing to Children

Young children have been shown to lack the ability to understand the persuasive intent of advertising messages or even differentiate between advertising and programming. Parents need help to counteract the food advertising and marketing which encourages unhealthy eating habits in children.

- Work with the federal government to limit the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children.



Empowering People

3. Empowering People

Everyone in BC should be given the opportunity to maximize their health potential and to help build their community. Unfortunately, not everyone in British Columbia has the resources or capacity to lead a healthy life. We need to address the underlying issues that contribute to these gaps in health.

Disadvantaged Populations

Disadvantaged British Columbians have increased susceptibility to a broad range of chronic conditions and are more challenged to live healthy lifestyles. For example, the rate of diabetes among those with low incomes is double those with high incomes.

- All levels of government should work with First Nations communities, leaders and educators to increase the rate of high school graduation among Aboriginal children to that of non-Aboriginal children and improve Aboriginal representation in the workforce.
- Increase skill bridging programs to upgrade professional or technological skills and improve coordination between employers, apprenticeship bodies and licensing associations – making it easier for immigrants to Canadianize their skills and credentials.
- Provide additional supports to settlement counselors in order to improve their clients' integration and chances for success in BC.

Income Security

Sufficient income allows access to adequate housing, nutritious foods, safe communities and participation in recreational, educational and cultural opportunities as well as other essentials for a healthy life.

- Establish a Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Adjust Income Assistance support rates to account for the actual cost of fresh and healthy food.
- Index the minimum wage and Income Assistance to the rate of inflation annually.

Making it Work, Working Together



4. Making it Work, Working Together

When everyone doesn't have an equal chance to be healthy – it costs us all. By working together we can prevent chronic disease and at the same time address the lost productivity, foregone tax revenue, reduced consumer spending and higher public expenditures that result when the underlying causes of disease are overlooked.

It will require strong leadership to develop an integrated approach to health that harnesses the ideas and capacity of partners in civil society, business and other levels of government. By working together we can build a brighter, healthier future for BC families.

Whole of Government, Whole of Society

Using a 'whole of government' approach to healthy living, barriers can be reduced between departments and new understandings developed among all ministries of the role they play in improving the health of British Columbians. Outside of government there are people in every corner of BC who are committed to building a healthier future - this is a rich resource which should be tapped.

- Recommit to a 'whole of government' approach to healthy living by coordinating inter-governmental activities to reduce barriers to health.
- Review policies throughout government with respect to their impact on the reduction of inequities in health and strengthening chronic disease prevention. Include and evaluate these activities in all Ministry Service Plans.
- Engage with other sectors of society – non-governmental organizations, business, academia, labour, media, other levels of government and agencies – in developing a coordinated and integrated approach to health promotion.

Action and Accountability

With the right supports for children and their families to live healthier, it should be possible to reduce the burden of chronic disease, lessen the health care load and slow the growth of health care spending. The only way to ensure progress is to establish a plan, assign responsibility, and allocate resources for activities and measure outcomes.

- Invest in population based health promotion and disease prevention strategies by raising public health funding to 6% of the total health budget from its current funding of approximately 3%.
- Develop a comprehensive, cross-government action plan with specific targets to address health inequities arising from socio-economic disadvantage.
- Assign responsibility for overseeing the coordination of inter-ministerial efforts to meet the targets to reduce health inequities to a Minister.
- Allocate funding to implement policies and actions that achieve the targets and mechanisms for measuring and reporting progress.



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**For more detailed information
on BCHLA's recommendations
for a healthier British Columbia,
please visit www.bchealthyliving.ca**

