



Positive. Public.

B.C.'s Voice for Medicare

Annual Report 2012

Working together

2012 marked a significant year for public health care: the 50th anniversary of Medicare. This anniversary was cause to celebrate our national health program which has come to represent some of the most cherished values shared by communities across this country: kindness, fairness, and compassion. In the past year the BC Health Coalition shared in these celebrations and worked to strengthen and protect our public system to ensure that it is here for another fifty years to come.

2012 also posed significant challenges to public health care. Promoters of for-profit care are more determined than ever to do away with a fair public system and open up Canada's health care "market" for profit.

The BC Health Coalition faced internal challenges as well. It is a testament to the incredible strength of our members' commitment to universal public health care, and your respect for the work we do together in our communities, that we are able to carry the work forward today.

Our accomplishments together in 2012 are truly impressive. As a result of these efforts, more and more people across B.C. are passionately engaging in the movement to strengthen and protect public health care.

Grounding our work in shared values

The BCHC's work is rooted in the belief that access to care must be based solely on need – not an individual's age, cultural heritage, gender, sexual orientation, class, geographical location, or their ability to pay.

This is the vision that brings caring individuals together with community and labour partners in our work to promote the positive, public solutions that are needed to address the challenges our system faces today. This vision also anchors our

determination to resist the forces that believe change to our health care system should be driven by greed, profit, and big business.



Sounding the alarm to stop illegal billing by private, for-profit clinics

In 2012 BC's Medical Services Commission released the long-awaited report on their audit of Dr. Brian Day's Cambie Surgical Centre and Specialist Referral Clinic. The report found extensive evidence that the clinics had engaged in billing practices contrary to BC's Medicare Protection Act.

The media covered this issue extensively and, despite the shocking results of the audit, Dr. Day and the clinics were able to dominate the media narrative. The BCHC acted quickly to organize a demonstration and news conference outside the Cambie Clinic with speakers from Canadian Doctors for Medicare. It was a huge success. By attracting major media focus on the issue via the demonstration we succeeded in reversing public scrutiny back onto the practices of for-profit clinics.

Supporting positive, public solutions to make Medicare stronger in British Columbia

Renewing the Canada Health Accord

The BCHC is collaborating with allies across the country to call for a renewed health accord as the expiry of the current federal-provincial-territorial agreement looms ahead. We have our work cut out for us: the federal government walked away from the negotiating table before talks had even started and plans to make significant cuts to health transfer payments to the provinces and territories.



Last summer we got the attention of premiers across the country when we took to the streets and demonstrated a huge call for leadership during the National Day of Action for a 2014 Health Accord. The day of action was organized by health coalitions and the Council of Canadians in advance of the July 2012 premiers' meeting in Halifax. And the premiers took notice – since then, many of them have joined us in demanding that the federal government return to the negotiating table.

Then in December we took the call for federal leadership directly to Members of Parliament. Health care advocates from across the country converged on Ottawa for Medicare Week to meet face to face with MPs and ask for their commitment for a 2014 Health Accord. The BCHC also mobilized people across B.C. to flood key MPs' voicemail boxes with personal messages from constituents calling for a renewed accord.

Defending public health care in court

In January 2009, a group of for-profit clinics led by Dr. Brian Day launched a lawsuit against the BC provincial government. The case is set to go to trial in early 2014.

The clinics are seeking to have the courts strike down our provincial health care legislation, the Medical Protection Act. This is a direct attack on the single most important feature of the Medicare model, which is that health care be provided according to a patient's need, not her or his ability to pay.

Although this case is being heard in B.C., it is very likely that the case will be appealed and end up in the Supreme Court of Canada. This could produce the defining Charter interpretation that would apply across the country – and it could be the one that destroys equal access to our health care system.

The BCHC and Canadian Doctors for Medicare are interveners in this case. Our intervenor status means that we are able to fight for Medicare in this court case by calling on experts to provide evidence in support of our public health care system. In 2012 the BCHC continued to prepare the strongest case possible in order to defend public health care when the challenge goes to trial.

Building momentum towards improved seniors' care in B.C.

The past year was busy for the BCHC's Home and Community Care campaign. The BC Ombudsperson's office published the second part of her report on seniors care in February 2012. The report outlines a clear roadmap to addressing serious problems in our home and community care system, and reveals that the Ministry of Health is not fulfilling its leadership role in seniors' care.

BCHC recognized that it was more important than ever for the people of B.C. to understand the Ombudsperson's findings and recommendations and to add our voices to the growing call to seize this opportunity to provide the best care for seniors in our province.

The BCHC generated awareness about the report and pressured the government to implement the recommendations throughout the year. We co-organized forums across B.C. on the report's findings, including a Lower Mainland forum that drew over 400 seniors, service providers, and advocates. We also produced an accessible summary of the report, and made presentations to groups across the province about using the report as a tool to advocate for positive change. The BCHC also generated sustained media interest in the report and the government's response to it.

The BC government has taken a number of steps to fulfill the Ombudsperson's

Recommendations thanks to these efforts; however, the province's response so far does not commit the government to addressing most of the problems outlined in the report.

An independent advocate for seniors

The BCHC, along with others, has been pushing for long time to see the establishment of a seniors' advocate in B.C. In response to this pressure, the Ministry of Health agreed in 2012 to create a new position. The BCHC mobilized supporters across the province to participate in the province-wide consultation on the role of the advocate. We were able to successfully advocate for a broad mandate for the position but, while the response in community after community was to have an independent advocate, the government chose to have a seniors advocate attached to the Ministry of Health rather than an independent position reporting to the legislature.

Working with young people to build a strong future for public health care

The past year BCHC engaged with young people in classrooms and communities across B.C. In the words of Vince:

"This was my first year with the project and it was amazing to see youth passionately and actively engaging on issues related to health care in Canada. I saw young people excitedly talking about their experiences with the health care system, challenging one another to reflect on the values inherent in our universal public health care system, and keen to continue these conversations outside of the workshop setting.

"After all 8 workshops that I co-facilitated, teachers approached us to share their own stories and thoughts and to express how impressed they were with the knowledge and experiences of the young participants in the room. It was inspiring to see and hear youth actively participating in conversations about health care and I can't wait to be a part of this project for many years to come!"

-Vince Terstappen, Project & Operations Coordinator,
Check Your Head

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the thousands of people throughout the province who make up the BCHC community. It is thanks to your dedication and initiative that we

have such a vibrant movement for a strong public health care system in B.C. Thank you for your time organizing townhall meetings, writing letters to your local papers, meeting with your MLAs, and sharing your passion for fair and accessible care with your family, friends and community.

Thank you to our volunteers who help organize events like Health Care Drinks, stuff envelopes, sit at our information tables and even put on silly red underwear and march in parades.

Thank you to our donors who make our work possible by giving generously so that we can cover the costs of running the coalition and its campaigns.

The challenges ahead of us

In the coming year, British Columbia – and the BC Health Coalition – will be at the centre of one of the most serious threats that Medicare has faced in its fifty years. The private clinics' legal challenge will not only require us to do everything we can to win in the courtroom, we will also need to do everything we can to make sure that the public debate around the case includes strong voices and accurate information.

The coming year is also going to require collaborating with allies across the country to hold the federal government to its responsibilities to health care and ensure that we achieve a renewed Health Accord in 2014.

Our community of health care advocates is going to need to bring all our passion, organizing experience, and collaboration together in order to do this, and we look forward to making it happen together with you.

With thanks for everyone's incredible work in 2012,



Rachel Tutte
Co-chairs, BC Health Coalition



Rick Turner

Member Organizations

411 Seniors Centre
AIDS Vancouver Society
BC Federation of Labour
BC Federation of Retired Union Members
BC Government and Services Employees' Union
BC Government Retired Employees Association - Langley Surrey Branch
BC Government Retired Employees Association - New Westminster & District Branch
BCGEU Component 4 Health Services
BCGEU Hospital & Allied Services Component 2
BCYT - Building & Construction Trades Council
Campbell River, Courtenay & District Labour Council
Canadian Union of Public Employees of BC
Castlegar & District Health Watch
Check Your Head
Confederation of Canadian Unions
Council of Canadians - BC/Yukon Organizing Office
Council of Canadians - Campbell River Chapter
Council of Canadians - Surrey, Langley and White Rock Chapter
Council of Canadians - Vancouver/Burnaby Chapter
Council of Seniors Citizens' Organizations of BC
East Kootenay District Labour Council
East Kootenay Railway Pensioners' Association
East Kootenay Seniors Coalition
Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC
Greater Victoria Seniors
Health Sciences Association
HEU - 100 Mile House Local
HEU - Kamloops Thompson Local
HEU - Kaslo Local
HEU - Port Alberni Local
HEU - Richmond Lions Manor Local
HEU - St Vincent's Hospital Local
HEU - Tofino Local
Hospital Employees' Union
Jewish Senior Alliance of Greater Vancouver
Kamloops Health Coalition
Nelson and Area Society for Health/Save Our Services
New Westminster & District Labour Council
North Okanagan Labour Council
Occupational First Aid Attendants Association of BC
Port Alberni & District Labour Council
Positive Living BC

Qmunity
REACH Centre Association
Save Our Hospital Coalition
Save Our Northern Seniors
Seniors on Guard for Medicare
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Seniors
South Island Health Coalition
South Okanagan Boundary Labour Council
Surrey Civic Coalition
Thompson Rivers University Students' Union
Union of Psychiatric Nurses
Unitarian Church of Vancouver - Social Justice Committee
United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1518
Vancouver and District Labour Council
Vancouver Cross Cultural Seniors Network Society



Steering Committee Members

Rick Turner (co-chair)- Kamloops Health Coalition
Rachel Tutte (co-chair) - Health Sciences Association
Anita Zaenker - BC Government & Service Employees' Union
Art Kube - Council of Senior Citizen Organizations
Ava Waxman - Council of Canadians
Summer McFadyen - BC Federation of Labour
Kaitlin Pelletier - Check Your Head
Margaret Coutts - Council of Canadians (Vancouver Chapter)
Chris Kincaid - Hospital Employees' Union
Pat Savage - South Island Health Coalition
Zoe Magnus - Canadian Union of Public Employees (BC)

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