

Ombudsman's Report: BCHC calls on government to follow through on its commitments



BC's home and community health care system is in serious decline after years of inadequate funding, restructuring and lack of leadership on the part of government.

From home support to residential care to palliative care, the restructuring of home and community care has prompted many organizations to raise concerns, including the Ombudsman's Office.

The Ombudsman began a systemic investigation in 2008 into the state of seniors' care in BC after receiving numerous complaints from family members and advocates of seniors in care. The BCHC was one of many organizations that prepared submissions.

Getting it Right for Seniors: Provincial Ombudsman Kim Carter delivers the keynote address at BCHC's May 14th Seniors' Forum in Burnaby

This input went into the Ombudsman's December 2009 report entitled *The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 1)*. The report contains ten recommendations on rights for seniors in residential care, access to information about residential care and the role of resident and family councils.

The public response to this investigation has been unparalleled in the history of the Ombudsman's office. However, despite this response and the depth and scope of the investigation itself, the Ministry of Health Services and Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport have only agreed to implement four of the ten recommendations.

The BCHC is concerned the government will be unable to meet the resident and family needs identified in the report if it fails to fully implement all the recommendations in all three areas.

We have expressed our concerns directly with the ministers responsible for seniors and have issued province wide Action Alerts calling on British Columbians to demand that the government work to ensure full implementation of the report's recommendations and to confirm that the steps have been taken to meet the March 31st deadline for the four recommendations it has accepted to date.

In April the Kamloops Health Coalition hosted BCHC Co-Chair Alice Edge who delivered an overview of the Ombudsman's report and discussed its usefulness as a tool to advocate for improving seniors care in BC.

For more information on the Ombudsman's report and its implications in your community, contact the BCHC. 📧

For more information on the Ombudsman's report and its implications in your community, contact the BCHC. 📧

KNOW YOUR MEDICARE RIGHTS!

Have you ever been asked to pay a fee for a medically necessary surgical or diagnostic procedure? Know a friend or family member who has?

Private, for-profit surgical and medical clinics are expanding across the province, and many are illegally charging patients for publicly insured surgical, physician and diagnostic services.

Unfortunately, the provincial government increasingly ignores or chooses not to enforce Medicare laws that limit for-profit delivery of medically necessary services.

The BCHC has produced "Know your Medicare Rights" pocket cards that outline your rights under provincial health care legislation and that have instructions on filing a complaint and requesting reimbursement for unlawful out-of-pocket charges.

Email or call the BCHC office to order yours today!

KNOW YOUR MEDICARE RIGHTS



Warning
Private, for-profit surgical and medical clinics are expanding across the province and many are illegally charging patients for publicly insured surgical and diagnostic services. Unfortunately, the provincial government increasingly ignores or chooses not to enforce Medicare laws that limit for-profit delivery of medically necessary services. It's up to you to know your rights under provincial health care legislation in order to stop the user-fees and extra billing by any health care provider for insured medical services and protect Medicare from for-profit operators and investors.

Email or call the BCHC office to order yours today!

Health Coalition brings together public health care advocates from across BC



Medicare: it's got us covered. Participants at BCHC's recent Seniors' Forum tell it like it is.

A recent sunny weekend in Burnaby saw public health care supporters come together to network and share experiences on how to challenge privatization and support health care solutions in the public, not-for-profit sector.

The BCHC's May 14th **Seniors Deserve Quality Public Health Care!** forum hosted a group of 65 seniors representing community organizations from Cranbrook to Campbell River. The event was organized by our Home and Community Care working group and provided an afternoon of workshops to help participants strategize on taking action to achieve quality and accessible health care for BC's seniors.

Keynote speaker Provincial Ombudsman Kim Carter provided an overview of her office's mandate and summary of the work that went into her recent systemic investigation into seniors' care in BC (see article on page 4).

Our **Moving Medicare 2010 Regional Gathering** took place the following day. This was an interactive all-day event featuring workshops that delved deeper into the issues that matter to public health care advocates and helped participants build skills and strategies for action that they can take back to their communities. For instance, participants learned from a case study of the successful community campaign to stop OR cuts in Castlegar.

These are critical times for public health care advocates. Governments at all levels continue to push for more private control of our health care system, and policy makers are using the recent economic crisis as an excuse to question government's role in guaranteeing that everyone has access to timely, quality health care, regardless of income. The BCHC plays an important role in networking activists across the province to oppose privatization and protect Medicare. 📧

Youth Engagement Strategy reaches youth across BC, raises awareness of health care issues

The BCHC is proud to be a partner with Check Your Head, a youth-driven non-profit society, on the Youth Engagement Strategy. For the past three years the Youth Engagement Strategy has been presenting workshops on our public health care system to youth all over BC.

Through facilitated discussions and interactive activities, youth participants explore the values behind universal care, encounter the realities of for-profit health care, and discuss the history of our health care system.

There are many questions about what's best for Canada's health care system, yet there is little youth-accessible information and few opportunities for youth-based dialogue on this issue. The workshops provide a space for much-needed youth-to-youth education on systems of health care. "Young people recognize the work of our previous generations to make the health care system a reality and we appreciate this opportunity to create an even stronger and more caring system," says Anna Hilliar of Check Your Head. "Of all of the issues that Check Your Head talks about, public health care is the one issue that youth take pride in immediately."



Check Your Head is a youth-driven organization whose youth facilitators offer well-researched, interactive, and easy to understand workshops to elementary and high school aged youth on many local and global issues. Since its inception, Check Your Head has delivered over 1,800 workshops and reached over 50,000 youth in BC and across Canada.

To request a Youth Engagement Strategy workshop in your community, contact Check Your Head at 604-685-6631. 📍

BCHC speaks out against cuts to medical coverage for people with disabilities

Last April the Ministry of Housing and Social Development announced a number of cuts to the health and medical services available to people receiving provincial disability benefits and income assistance.

This includes cuts to vital services and resources such as monthly nutritional supplements, medical coverage, dental treatment and shelter allowances.

The BCHC called on Rich Coleman, Minister of Housing and Development to immediately reverse these cuts. BCHC members across the province joined the call for a reversal of the decision.

This month the Ministry of Housing and Social Development announced that it has reversed some of the health coverage restrictions for seniors

with disabilities when they move from provincial assistance and onto federal pensions, and people leaving provincial assistance for Canada Pension Plan-Disability benefits.

Despite this success, cuts to these vital services still remain in place and will have very real consequences for the quality of life, dignity and health of low-income people and people with disabilities. Moreover, decline in health and well being of those affected by these cuts will only result in increased pressure on our acute care services and greater long-term costs to the public health care system as a whole.

The BC Health Coalition continues to call on Rich Coleman, Minister of Housing and Development, to reverse all of these cuts immediately. 📍

BCHC sounds alarm on questionable health authority appointment

The BC Health Coalition is calling into question the provincial government's commitment to defend public health care in the courts in the wake of the recent appointment of Kip Woodward as chair of Vancouver Coastal Health—the province's second largest health authority.

Mr. Woodward is a former Board member of the for-profit Cambie Surgery Centre and his family investment firm, Woodcorp Investments Ltd., is an investor in the controversial private clinic run by Dr. Brian Day.

Cambie Surgery is at the centre of the pivotal BC Supreme Court case launched by Day and a consortium of private for-profit clinics against the BC Medical Services Commission and the provincial government. The clinics aim to have key provisions of provincial health legislation declared unconstitutional so that they can sell necessary health services to patients who can afford to pay a premium to jump the queue and open up BC to US-style health insurance.

Mr. Woodward is a known advocate of privatized, for-profit health care. Last fall he wrote letters to Health Minister Kevin Falcon on Woodcorp

letterhead, but in the capacity of Chair of Providence Health Care.

In these letters Woodward stated that Providence's previous relationship with Vancouver Coastal "held us back" and he expressed a desire for "new funding models and new delivery processes."

One of the letters goes on to outline numerous "revenue generating" and "cost recovery" schemes that could not possibly avoid violating Medicare's principles of accessibility and universality and that would further advance the interests of for-profit health care investors.

Health minister Kevin Falcon has a responsibility to defend our public health care system in the courts and to protect patients from this attack on BC's Medicare laws. Now, he is appointing an investor in one of the key players in this legal attack on public health care to run our Medicare system.

The Health Coalition is calling on all British Columbians to demand that Minister Falcon take a strong stand in defending provincial health legislation from the legal challenge launched by private for-profit clinic operators in BC. This will ensure that we have a health care system that works for all. 📍

Who's defending your Medicare?



Health Minister Falcon has a responsibility to protect patients from pushers of privatized, for-profit health care and their legal attack on Medicare. Now, he has appointed some of the same players who stand to benefit from this attack to key positions in our public health care system.



Medicare: it's got us covered.

Take action today and demand that the fox not be entrusted to guard the hen house: Tell the provincial government to take a strong stand in defending Medicare in the courts!

www.bchealthcoalition.ca

WHY I CARE ABOUT MEDICARE

A young family, new to Canada and a complicated pregnancy in 1971. To our amazement, I was kept in hospital for 3 weeks at \$1 a day!!! and my baby was saved. Medicare, Canada, thank you. —Aphrodite

Canadian Medicare means that my life is worth as much, no more, no less than any other human being, rich or poor. Without it I would have had a very short lived life. —Melanie

Because it means I don't have to worry about "what if". I know that should I need care, it's there for me and my family. —Alice