

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Re: Letter of Support to the BC Medical Association

THAT Council authorizes the Mayor to write a letter of support to the British Columbia Medical Association and the Premier in respect of the need for more addiction services in British Columbia.

BACKGROUND:

See attached.

Date: April 1, 2009

File: 0550-01



Mar 26, 2009 13:00 ET

BC Medical Association-BC Needs More Addiction Services: 1 in 10 Is Addicted to Something

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA--(Marketwire - March 26, 2009) - Addiction affects nearly 400,000 people in British Columbia. Those who suffer from this disease are not only the visibly homeless-they come from every socioeconomic, geographic, cultural and age demographic, and their struggles include not only addiction to illicit drugs but also the more prevalent addictions to alcohol and gambling.

In its just released policy paper, *Stepping Forward: Improving Addiction Care in British Columbia*, the BC Medical Association makes 10 recommendations to enhance current methods of addiction care and ensure that everyone who needs treatment has access to it. Chief among these recommendations is that the provincial government formally recognize addiction as a chronic disease and fund all medical care for addicted people accordingly. As well, BC must significantly invest in treatment infrastructure and community support.

"Most people tend to think of Vancouver's downtown eastside as the problem area of the province. The reality is that nearly 1 in 10 British Columbians province wide suffers from some form of addiction or dependence. The downtown eastside is not where people often start, but it is where they often end up," said Dr. Shao Hua Lu, lead author of the paper from the BCMA's Council on Health Promotion. "The more severe cases lead to death, but begin with homelessness, hospital and ER use, and crime."

In 2002, the latest year we have figures for, the financial burden of substance abuse in British Columbia was \$6 billion and can be attributed to direct costs such as health care and law enforcement, and indirect costs such as disability, insurance, and time away from work. A recent study showed that as many as 1 in 10 visits to Vancouver General Hospital's emergency department was for substance abuse. Each year BC uses enough hospital beds across BC caring for people with substance abuse to fill Kelowna General Hospital every day for a year.

"The provincial government has reinvested in mental health, addiction services and housing in recent years-and it is to be commended-but there are still critical gaps that must be addressed if we are to truly tackle addiction in BC," said Dr. Lu.

BC needs to have a full continuum of care for addictions-from prevention through treatment and community support to effectively supporting those struggling with an addiction. For this reason the BCMA is calling for the development of 600 new addiction treatment beds (self-contained units rather than simply beds), and the creation and funding of 240 new flexible medically supervised detoxification spaces so that detox is available "on demand." These are currently two of the biggest gaps in addiction care in BC. These spaces simply aren't there when they are needed the most. The complete report can be found at www.bcma.org.

BACKGROUND -

Addiction in British Columbia

- Almost 1 in 10 (or 400,000) British Columbians suffer from some form of addiction or dependence (not including tobacco).
- The Vancouver Island Health Authority estimates that "there are over 150,000 people across Vancouver Island coping with mental health and addiction issues."
- The Fraser Health Authority estimates that "by 2010 approximately 192,000 to 240,000 people will be in need of withdrawal management and/or treatment services for substance misuse."

Deaths

- 213 British Columbians died from unintentional illicit or illegal overdose in 2006.
- 1,986 British Columbians died from alcohol-related deaths in British Columbia in 2006; 46% (or 914 of them) were seniors.
- 77 British Columbians committed suicide from alcohol or drug poisoning in 2006.

Hospital and ER use

- 48,082 hospital days in BC in 2004/2005 were utilized for substance abuse. That is enough hospital days to fill Kelowna General Hospital every day for a year.
- 1 in 10 patients in Vancouver General Hospital's emergency department was there due to a substance abuse problem, shown in a 6-week study conducted in 2008.

Cost

- The total financial burden of substance abuse in British Columbia in 2002 was \$6 billion - averaging almost \$1,500 per capita. 40% of this is attributed to direct health costs and law enforcement and 60% is attributed to indirect costs, such as disability, time away from work, and insurance costs.

To view accompanying graph please click on the following link: <http://media3.marketwire.com/docs/bcma0326.pdf>

For more information, please contact

BC Medical Association

Sharon Shore

(604) 638-2832 or Pager: (604) 306-1866

Website: www.bcma.org

[Click here to see all recent news from this company](#)

Privacy Statement | Terms of Service | Sitemap | © 2009 Marketwire, Incorporated. All rights reserved.

Your newswire of choice for expert news release distribution.

1-800-774-9473 (US) | 1-888-299-0338 (Canada) | +44-20-7562-6550 (UK)