



HEALTH OFFICERS' COUNCIL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Attn: Dr. James Lu, 7000 Westminster Highway, Richmond, BC V6X 1A2

Health Authority Leaders

December 3, 2007

I am writing on behalf of the BC Health Officer's Council (HOC). The Health Officers' Council of BC is made up of medical health officers (public health physicians) practicing in British Columbia. Medical Health Officers have a responsibility to advise and advocate for public policies and programs directed toward improving the health of populations. The Health Officer's Council has recently identified child poverty in BC as an issue requiring urgent attention.

Medical Health Officer's from across BC have already been engaged in significant work on this topic. To date, we have worked with our partners (First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and Human Early Learning Partnership at UBC) to develop a policy options paper, which was submitted to the Conversation on Health. We have attached a copy of this paper, which outlines the position of HOC on policies to reduce child poverty. In particular, we are asking the provincial government to create a child poverty reduction strategy and to set targets for reducing child poverty.

From the perspective of the health care system, one of the strongest prevention tools is reducing poverty. Child poverty is a population health concern of significant magnitude in our province. As you may be aware, First Call's recently released Child Poverty report card indicated that BC continues to have the highest child poverty rate in the country (See report: www.firstcallbc.org/documents/childpoverty07.pdf). Poverty in childhood leads not only to immediate and lifelong health concerns, but also impacts lifelong achievement. Children do not choose to live in poverty. Safeguarding the health of our children and population through strategic investment in child development is both a moral obligation and a critical tool for sustaining our health care system.

We are writing to not only inform you of this work, but to engage the senior leadership **[in your health authority]** in supporting our advocacy efforts. We are requesting an opportunity to brief the Senior Executive team on this initiative, as well as to identify potential roles for senior leaders from all health authorities. Addressing child poverty requires partnership and collective action and we look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

James Lu MD, Chair, Health Officers' Council of BC
Medical Health Officer for Richmond