

January 24, 2007

Bulletin

Members are encouraged to speak out in your communities when the “Conversation on Health” comes to town

A strong stand to support and improve public health care is needed, as the Campbell government gears up its push for service cuts, more user pay and private, for-profit care

BCNU members are encouraged to get involved and speak out in their local communities, as the provincial government's “Conversation on Health” prepares for its first regional visits.

Focus groups and forums are scheduled to begin in Kamloops on February 2-3. They'll move through a total of 16 communities most weekends during the next several months. A complete schedule of regional events is attached.

Pre-reading materials released last week increase concerns that the Premier has designed the \$10 million exercise to justify more services cuts, user pay schemes and private for-profit health care. The front page repeats the false and discredited claim that “if demand continues to rise, BC's health spending could be over 70 per cent of the total provincial budget by 2017.” (In fact, it's likely to be about the same as it is today, about 40 per cent).

BCNU urges members to sign up and tell the government how health care can be strengthened and improved within our public health care system, without cutting services or forcing patients to pay for their care. Attached are BCNU's key messages.

When the “Conversation” road show comes to your area for its weekend visit, there will be **four separate activities** covering the Friday and Saturday.

1. **Friday morning** — focus group of health care providers – participants were selected regionally by BCNU regional chairs and other organizations.
2. **Friday afternoon** — focus group for patients – at this time it's not known how the government is choosing the participants.
3. **Friday night** — forum for health care providers – all health care providers in the area who have registered on the Conversation on Health (COH) website are supposed to be invited to attend. If you haven't received an invitation, contact the COH.
4. **Saturday morning and afternoon** — forum for the public – participants are being chosen at random from area members of the public who have signed up on the COH website. The government wants to keep health care providers out of these public forums, and segregate providers into their own forums Friday night.

To support medicare, the BC Health Coalition will be organizing activities in many communities before and during the Conversation on Health activities. Watch your BCNU bulletin board and the news media for events.



Nurses have solutions

As key front-line health care providers, nurses and allied health care workers in BCNU have many solutions to improve public health care in BC.



Stronger Public Health Care

We want stronger public health care, because we don't want to go back to the days before medicare – when families had to choose between putting food on the table, or going to the doctor to get care for an illness or injury.

We want stronger public health care, because medicare is the fairest, most efficient way of organizing health care, funded through a progressive taxation system, with access based on patients' medical needs not on their income.

We want stronger public health care, because we don't want any part of the American private, for-profit health care system, where millions of citizens have no health insurance at all, and most private insurance covers only part of the cost of care.



Saying "No" to user-pay schemes

We don't want schemes that would force patients to pay for part or all of their care out of their own pockets, or force patients to get care from expensive private, for-profit facilities.



We can afford better public health care

Contrary to what the government claims, we can afford better public health care in BC.

Contrary to what the government claims, there is no health care sustainability crisis.

Publicly available statistics show public health care spending in BC accounts for about the same percentage of our economy as 15 years ago. (6.8 per cent in 1991, 7.1 per cent in 2005).

While the government claims it is increasing the health care budget by 8 per cent a year, the figure is only an average of 5.5 per cent a year since 1995, and only about two per cent for the next three years. The government's claim that health care will consume 71 per cent of the budget by 2017 just doesn't add up. It's more likely to consume 40 per cent, about where it stands today. (Sources: *Canadian Institute for Health Information, Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*).



Implement the Romanow Report

We need improvements to make our public health care system more effective – improvements that were called for in the Roy Romanow report in 2002 but never implemented.



Solutions for stronger public health care

- Better first contact or primary health care – with multidisciplinary community health centres open 24/7;
- Better, more effective home care and home support to take the burden off hospitals;
- Better seniors care – with access to improved home care, home support and long term care nursing homes with the capability of treating seniors for certain illnesses on site;
- Better co-ordination of surgery wait lists, full use of capacity in public ORs;
- Better mental health services with outreach teams to help clients stay in their communities or seek residential care when needed;
- A national pharmacare program to provide equal access to prescription drugs across the country and control drug costs through bulk-buying;
- Recruiting and retaining nurses and other staff needed by our growing population and ensuring they can provide care in a safe and healthy work environment.

Canadians decided more than 40 years ago that health care is too fundamental to the well-being of our citizens to be left to the whims of the marketplace, to be bought and sold like luxury cars and big screen TVs.

The so-called “mixed” public/private health care systems of Europe have their own problems that the government ignored in its superficial “fact-finding tour”.



Concern about government bias in Conversation on Health

We are concerned that by providing biased materials and misleading statistics, the government appears to be pursuing its own agenda through this Conversation.

We’re concerned the government has set up the Conversation to justify changes to download more costs onto patients and bring in more private, for-profit health care. We can’t understand why the government is segregating the voices of health care providers to separate forums in the Conversation on Health.

We’re concerned the emphasis on “sustainability” is code for more service cuts, by a government that forced health authorities to cut 1200 acute care beds and almost 4,000 long term care beds in its first three years in office.

We’re concerned that polling shows the public believes the government has already made up its mind.



Nurses participating in good faith

Nevertheless, nurses are participating in good faith in the Conversation on Health. As front-line health care providers who care for patients 24-7 365 days a year we have an obligation to make sure our voices are heard. We offer our solutions in the hope the government listens to our suggestions and acts on them.

For more information on BCNU’s solutions for stronger public health, go to our website at www.bcnu.org. Click on Campaigns/Issues/Save Medicare.

BACKGROUND

2006HEALTH0080-001537
Dec. 19, 2006

Ministry of Health

REGIONAL PUBLIC FORUM AND PROFESSIONAL MEETING DATES

The following list outlines the communities hosting regional public forums and professional meetings, the dates for these events, and registration deadlines. Venues for the regional public forums and professional meetings are based on availability.

COMMUNITY	REGISTRATION DEADLINES	FORUM DATES	PROFESSIONAL MEETING DATES	FORUM AND MEETING LOCATIONS
Kamloops	December 29	February 3	February 2	Coast Canadian Inn 339 St Paul Street
Surrey	December 29	February 10	February 9	Days Inn Surrey Hotel 9850 King George Highway
Kelowna	January 11	February 17	February 16	Grand Okanagan Lakefront Resort 1310 Water Street
Nanaimo	January 12	February 24	February 23	Coast Bastion Inn 11 Bastion Street
Chilliwack	January 19	March 3	March 2	Rhombus Hotels & Resorts 45920 First Avenue
Victoria	January 26	March 10	March 9	Hotel Grand Pacific 463 Belleville Street
Prince George	February 2	March 17	March 16	Forum: Coast Inn of the North 770 Brunswick Street Professional meeting: Ramada Hotel Downtown Prince George 444 George Street
Burnaby	February 9	March 24	March 23	Executive Hotel and Conference Centre 4201 Lougheed Hwy.
North Vancouver	February 16	March 31	March 30	Lonsdale Quay Hotel 123 Carrie Cates Court

COMMUNITY	REGISTRATION DEADLINES	FORUM DATES	PROFESSIONAL MEETING DATES	FORUM AND MEETING LOCATIONS
Richmond	March 2	April 14	April 13	Delta Vancouver Airport 3500 Cessna Drive
Cranbrook	March 9	April 21	April 20	Prestige Rocky Mountain Resort and Conference Centre 209 Van Horne Street South
Campbell River	March 16	April 28	April 27	Anchor Inn and Suites 261 Island Hwy
Fort St. John	March 23	May 5	May 4	Quality Inn Northern Grand Hotel 9830 100th Avenue
Smithers	March 30	May 12	May 11	Hudson Bay Lodge 3251 East Highway 16
Castlegar	April 13	May 26	May 25	Sandman Hotel 1944 Columbia Avenue
Vancouver	May 25	July 7	July 6	Vancouver Marriott Pinnacle Downtown 1128 Hastings Street