

Principles of a Health Promotion Foundation for Alberta

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A dedicated, well-financed and sustainable health promotion foundation has the potential to transform the quality of life of Albertans.

Although isolated gains have been made in improving Albertans' health status, a paradigm shift is required to achieve significant health outcomes across the entire population and to reduce demands on the healthcare system. A dedicated health promotion foundation is essential to create the fundamental change that is required.

The following principles are intended to guide the development of an effective health promotion foundation that will meet its full potential in improving the health of Albertans.

1. Sustainability

The funding provided for a dedicated health promotion foundation must be long-term, adequate and sustainable. Stable funding enables a wide range of activities to occur over an extended period of time that can address the broad social determinants of healthⁱ.

We propose that the equivalent of **at least one percent** of the total Alberta Health and Wellness budget be devoted to a dedicated health promotion foundation, or at least \$120 million annually. This proposed funding formula has been referred to as the "one percent solution"ⁱⁱ. A one percent investment in this foundation would almost double the current government budget for health promotion and disease/injury preventionⁱⁱⁱ.

This funding can be derived from an appropriation of the Alberta government's general revenue fund or by modest tax increases on liquor and tobacco **without affecting the existing healthcare budget**. It is important to protect the foundation and its funding from the increasing financial pressures of the acute care system.

2. Arms-length to government

The health promotion foundation must operate at arms-length to government to maintain accountability and transparency. The foundation should be governed by an independent board comprised of key stakeholders that are selected by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly. To help ensure independent and transparent governance and operations, the foundation must be created by an Act of the Legislative Assembly and should report directly to the Assembly each year.

3. Primary prevention focus

The foundation should support initiatives that are focused exclusively on primary prevention for the greatest impact. Primary prevention refers to actions taken to avoid or remove the root cause of a health problem before it arises. Secondary and tertiary prevention includes screening, rehabilitation, primary care and other forms of follow-up. By focusing on primary prevention, the foundation can maximize its potential impact.

4. Recognizing the social determinants of health

It is well established that the major determinants of health are beyond the scope of the healthcare system (e.g., housing, employment, education)ⁱ. The foundation must recognize the influence of these determinants in order to meet its full potential in improving population health. The health promotion foundation should be devoted exclusively to the prevention of chronic disease and injury, including mental health and addictions.

5. Independent of the healthcare system

The health promotion foundation must function independently of the acute care system in order to maintain financial autonomy and sustainability. The financial pressures on the healthcare system continue to rise as the result of increased treatment demands and various cost-drivers. Previous efforts to increase spending on health promotion and disease prevention have been impaired by increasing financial pressures on the healthcare system.

6. Focus on evidence-based interventions

The health promotion foundation must support evidence-based interventions that utilize best practices and promising practices. The evidence base for effective health promotion and disease prevention continues to build and this knowledge must be applied. However the focus on evidence should not impede innovation, especially where knowledge gaps exist.

7. The need for accountability and transparency

To be effective and sustainable, the foundation must be accountable and transparent and this can be achieved by the following measures:

- > Mandatory micro and macro level evaluation to ensure that best and promising practices are being followed, objectives are attained, and results are achieved.
- > Regular reporting of evaluation results with adequate dissemination methods to ensure that the results will add to the global knowledge base.
- > Reporting annually to the Legislative Assembly to ensure optimal integral collaboration between government and non-government stakeholders.

8. Multi-year funding grants

The foundation should provide funding grants for interventions that are at least three years in length to allow adequate time for population impact. The granting system should encourage partnerships and intersectoral collaboration for optimal results. Grants should be available to all not-for-profit and governmental organizations, including First Nations communities on reserves. A project's potential impact on disease burden and cost benefits should be taken into account. Proposals should be adjudicated objectively on the basis of relative merit by an independent expert review panel to prevent the potential for bias.

i Public Health Agency of Canada, "Social determinants of health", 2004

ii Premier's Commission on Future Healthcare for Albertans, 1989.

iii Alberta Health and Wellness budget estimates for 2007-08: <http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/publications/budget/estimates/est2007/health.pdf>

iv Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, published in "The Health of Canadians: The Federal Role, Part VI – Health Promotion and Disease Prevention" (Kirby Report), The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, October 2002. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-e/soci-e/rep-e/repoct02vol6part5-e.htm>

v Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, published in "The Health of Canadians: The Federal Role, Part VI – Health Promotion and Disease Prevention" (Kirby Report), The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, October 2002. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-e/soci-e/rep-e/repoct02vol6part5-e.htm>