

**Safeguarding the Public's Health
as a means to Promote Economic Growth and Prosperity**
The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century Responds to Budget 2010

March 5, 2010 (Ottawa) – The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21) – a network representing 32 national non-profit organizations, professional associations, health charities and academic researchers who share the common goal to improve and sustain the health of Canadians - is guarded in its praise of the Government of Canada's Budget 2010.

"The members of our Coalition understand the challenges facing the federal government in terms of returning Canada to a balanced budget. However, we believe that public health is under-funded and under-resourced at the best of times. Health promotion and disease prevention are too important to neglect," said CCPH21 Co-Chair Pamela Fralick, President and CEO of the Canadian Healthcare Association (CHA). "We look forward to working with the government to ensure that Canada continues to make needed investments in public health, which will result in a healthy workforce."

CCPH21 had called upon the federal government to maintain and if possible increase the budget dedicated to the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada's programs related to disease prevention, health protection and health promotion. The Coalition also called upon the federal government to increase investment in health research and to support mechanisms that would contribute to expanding the country's public health workforce. While CCPH21 welcomes the announcements for investments that should have a positive impact on health, it is concerned that the strategic reviews and cost control mechanisms will have a negative impact on federal funding in support of much-needed health protection, disease prevention and health promotion programs.

"Our country experienced a unique situation last year. The country's public health system functioned very well through two waves of H1N1, but it was stretched to the limit," said Debra Lynkowski, Co-Chair of CCPH21 and CEO of the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA). Lynkowski continued, "We were fortunate that another public health emergency did not occur at the same time. Now is not the time to cut back on essential public health services."

CCPH21 is pleased to see the federal government's intent to maintain the slated annual increase in the Canada Health Transfer amounts to the provinces and territories. This will help the Provincial and Territorial governments invest funds in public health services and functions as well as in health care services. CCPH21 is also pleased to note the renewal and in some cases increased funding for programs that will have a positive impact on the health and well-being of particular population groups. Continued investment in physical infrastructure on Aboriginal reserves, funding in support of people living with spinal cord injuries, and additional funding for research on medical isotopes are welcome. CCPH21 members were also pleased to see an increase, albeit very modest, in funding support to the country's three granting agencies, in particular to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

However, CCPH21 is concerned that programs that are approaching the end of their funding cycle, such as the National Immunization Strategy, are not mentioned in the budget. The Coalition is also concerned about the impact of federal funding of transfers to provinces and territories in support of health services in future years.

"The public health system aims to keep Canadians healthy and productive. Our lives and our economic growth and prosperity depend on a fully-resourced, well-functioning and effective public health infrastructure," said Lynkowski. "CCPH21 believes that now is the time to reinforce and invest in our country's public health infrastructure and services."

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