



**BC Rural Health Network**

via email

Attn: Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health  
PO BOX 9050, STN PROV GOVT.  
Victoria BC  
V8W 9E2

Re: Reaching Rural Residents in BC

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

Dear Minister Dix,

I write on behalf of the health interests of rural British Columbians. The BC Rural Health Network (BCRHN) represents communities, groups, and individuals throughout BC.

As you are aware, there is a high level of concern throughout our province regarding healthcare service and healthcare service allocation. This is especially true in resource poor rural communities. This has been exacerbated as we continue to face the impacts of Covid-19. All leaders involved understand the difficulty of resource planning with a pandemic. We believe now, more than ever, communications must be strong between residents and governments.

The goal of our organization is to communicate effectively with rural residents across BC. Communication on health and healthcare provision between governments and the rural population have missed the mark for decades. The BCRHN acknowledges that service delivery of healthcare is far more challenging in rural BC. The BCRHN realizes that the cost of providing service to rural residents is also much higher per capita simply due to locale. To reduce the costs and the challenges, the BCRHN believes that the BC Government needs to invest heavily and immediately in rural outreach. Investment in direct communication with rural residents is required to be proactive in changing behaviours and reducing costs to the system.

It is also recognized that our healthcare policy is to be universal in nature. We all deserve to have similar life expectancies, no matter our address.

The disconnect between urban and rural is very apparent from our informed organization's perspective. On Friday January 21, 2022, during the Covid-19 update, you mentioned an

example of progress that you have witnessed in your community stating that you have not seen anyone in your grocery store not wearing a mask. We wish that were also true in rural BC. In my town unfortunately, I see many people not wearing masks, and holding it as power to assert for their perceived freedom. This is one example of many that demonstrate a disconnect that surely needs attention from your Ministry.

The investment that has been missed and is missing, is in engagement with rural perspectives at the grassroots level. Effective communication is bi-directional, and unfortunately the information flow has been unidirectional from government to residents. This has resulted in disengagement of rural residents from their healthcare system. Not only are residents not well connected to the system, but they are also connected and influenced by misinformation that has successfully reached them. The system of providing an official message on local media/social media in attempts to reach rural residents has become a trigger and is dismissed as propaganda by too many. Unfortunately, the messages sent rarely reflect the realities of the rural resident's life, and trust has been lost.

The BCRHN requests a meeting to discuss how to begin the development of improved communications between governments and rural BC residents. Requesting inclusion in this meeting to provide a municipality's perspective are our Vice-President, Colin Moss, (a councillor of New Denver,) and Leonard Casley, a board member (Mayor of New Denver, whom you already know).

**The BCRHN is the healthcare voice of the rural residents of British Columbia and seeks better health outcomes for all people, through solutions-based approaches with governments, and information provision to residents.**

Yours in Health and Wellness,



Paul Adams

Administrator

250-438-0080

Cc: \ Ed Staples, Colin Moss, Peggy Skelton, Leonard Casley, Ted Patterson