

Via. email [HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca)  
August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Attn: Honourable Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health



**Re: Rural Healthcare Crisis – Meeting Request**

Dear Minister Dix,

I am writing on behalf of the BC Rural Health Network and the health and wellness of rural residents across our province.

The healthcare crisis in BC has become a significant safety issue for rural residents. Our membership and the rural public are becoming increasingly alarmed at closures, reductions of service, and the risks that are now realities for those living rurally. Our organization is a solution based, charitable group of rural residents, communities and organizations that are here to help. To do so, our voice needs inclusion in the conversation on creating better care for all British Columbians.

The BC Rural Health Network recognizes the significant challenges that healthcare provision has faced prior to the pandemic and the enormous added challenges that COVID-19 has put on an already strained system. We thank all public servants for their work and incredible efforts on keeping us all safe.

Unfortunately, the situation in rural British Columbia has become unacceptable. People have lost their lives and more will lose their lives due to the lack of healthcare infrastructure available. The situation for rural residents' compounds as the distance to the next facility is not a matter of a few minutes or kilometers it is often a matter of hours. Basic care provisions are being stripped from rural towns to support understaffed urban care, these measures may improve wait times for our urban neighbors, but it is harming rural residents.

The impacts continue to snowball. Having basic community level care from birth to death cannot be centralized. Having community based and community accountable management of local systems cannot be centralized. Having basic emergency response infrastructure for every resident is needed and cannot be centralized. Having communities engaged on their health and wellness is essential if we are to prevent further degradation of the trust in the system and our healthcare experts. Many rural residents are not being heard and many people question if they are being listened to at all.

We have solutions. Our organization is not about complaining and requesting you fix things without supplying potential solutions. We have communities willing to engage in a meaningful way and test better systems of care and management. Our organization believes that community involved management and new approaches driven by facts and science, will alleviate many of the problems faced by rural residents. Centralization is necessary for many specialty services and non-urgent care issues, but it fails miserably at managing basic rural care and connection with the rural public.

The BC Rural Health Network has a new Implementation Committee being chaired by Dr. Jude Kornelsen of UBC's Centre for Rural Research. Jude's team at UBC has many years of rural research that can supply some of the substance behind required policy changes and implementation. Research combined with the input of hospice, social workers, physicians, nurses, allied health workers, volunteers, the public and hopefully policy makers/decision makers will be the foundation that the committee grows platforms from. This committee will create meaningful policy recommendations to our organization and will be passed through to governments, authorities, communities, and residents. This new committee has gained the interest of many in our own

organization but also the interest of many other organizations who want/need changes in how rural healthcare is managed. We seek the inclusion of the Ministry at this important table.

The BC Rural Health Network also needs financial support and stable funding through governments. We sit as representatives at tables with physicians and healthcare professional groups that are all well funded by the BC Government. The voices of physicians, nurses and academia are viewed as important and essential in the healthcare conversation. The rural residents, volunteers, charities, allied workers, hospice workers, seniors' clubs, community grassroots organizations, who we stand for (our membership,) also need to be invested in and our voice needs to be brought forward in more conversations. We need a basic stable investment to allow for professional outreach to rural residents to provide them with the inclusion in the system that is desperately needed and missing. The trust of rural residents needs to be regained. The request for investment is in communication that is bi-directional and purposeful in raising rural health and wellness (we have plans ready to deploy)!

With a very small annual budget (\$24k provided through Michael Smith Foundation through the support of the Rural Coordination Centre of BC) and a small one-time grant (\$12k coming from the same source) the BC Rural Health Network has grown dramatically over the past 5 months. We have created an information portal for all rural residents in our new website. We have networked, collected, and distributed resources from many providers (including the BC Government.) We are apolitical and supply information and current news based in science and sound reporting without opinion. Our goal is to supply information to residents at the ground level and to have our community groups inform others within their communities. We are achieving results and will do much more with meaningful investment.

We have made a presentation to the standing committee on Finance, we have recognition of the need to invest in rural from many community councils and will be working towards adding full UBCM support in 2023. We would encourage you to come visit our website and see what we have done with very few dollars and many hundreds of hours of volunteer work <https://bcruralhealth.org/>

The voice of the BC Rural Health Network is increasing, and you may have seen our recent interviews in a variety of [local media](#) and on [Global TV News](#). These media events have resulted from the increased concern we are hearing from our members and the public daily. Rural BC needs your help!

We respectfully request a response to this letter and a video conference at your earliest convenience.

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

**Paul Adams** || Administrator || BC Rural Health Network ||

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