



**CPHA ACSP**

CANADIAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE

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**House of Commons' Standing Committee on Finance**

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Speaking Notes**

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Founded in 1910, CPHA is the independent voice for public health in Canada with links to the national and international communities. As the only Canadian non-governmental organization focused exclusively on public health, CPHA is uniquely positioned to advise decision-makers about healthy public policy and to guide initiatives to help safeguard the personal and community health of Canadians and people around the world.

CPHA is a national, not-for-profit, voluntary membership-based association. CPHA's members believe in universal and equitable access to the basic conditions that are necessary to achieve health for all. Our members comprise a range of health disciplines and professional backgrounds, which enable the Association to act as a powerful and reputable voice to undertake evidence-informed advocacy.

**Our Vision**

A healthy and just world

**Our Mission**

CPHA's mission is to enhance the health of people in Canada and to contribute to a healthier and more equitable world.

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Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to appear before you today.

Since this is the Finance Committee studying investments in health, I'd like to start with an interesting financial fact: for every dollar spent on mental health and addiction services, we save \$7 in health costs and \$30 in lost productivity and social costs. That's an incredible return on investment of 3600%... and represents a really smart investment by the government.

From a public health perspective, I'm very pleased to see some other smart investments in Budget 2017:

- The additional \$7 billion over 10 years for high-quality, affordable child care spaces will yield an ROI of 800%
- The investments in building, renewing and repairing Canada's stock of affordable housing will result in an ROI of 200%; and
- The \$47 million over five years to develop and implement a national action plan to respond to health risks posed by climate change could yield an ROI of 300% or more.

Where do these returns come from? In addition to avoiding illness and injury, as a result of these investments, people become more resilient, have less need for medical and social services, are absent from the workforce less and therefore better able to contribute to our economy.

Upstream investments are what public health is all about; creating the necessary conditions so Canadians can lead healthy lives and reduce the demand on the acute care system to fix them when they are sick.

Public health has a focus on the implementation of policies and the provision of services to prevent or address issues from a population-based, health promoting perspective. As the returns on investment indicate, these approaches can have a significant influence.

When looking at mental wellness, the government's direct financial contribution in Budget 2017 is important for those who are facing challenges today, but it is the other contributions to poverty reduction, housing strategies and support for Indigenous communities that will have a much greater effect for future generations.

Poverty, food insecurity and unstable or unaffordable housing are demonstrated risks factors for mental wellness. So, in addition to the Government of Canada's direct investment in mental health services, Budget 2017 demonstrates the government's commitment to a whole-of-government approach to improving the mental wellness of Canadians.

While we support the investments in this budget, we encourage the government to look at additional upstream investments in healthy, resilient communities that support and nurture all of its members, to provide an environment that supports physical and mental wellness.

We also know that informal caregivers are essential to sustaining Canada's health care system and their economic contribution was estimated at \$25 billion in 2009. As such, it's reassuring to see the new, Canada Caregiver Credit under the *Income Tax Act* supporting caregivers in general, as well as the changes to the *Veteran Well-being Act* supporting veterans' caregivers.

While hospitals play a crucial role in the overall health system, we know that they are the most expensive and least effective location for the delivery of mid- to long-term health services. The government's commitment to support the provinces and territories to enhance home care services is an important step in fundamentally restructuring where and by whom mid- and long-term health services are provided and a crucial step in supporting the sustainability of the acute care system.

In Canada today, the acute care system continues to absorb the majority of health sector resources, with less than 3% of health spending allocated towards health promotion and disease prevention. If we want a sustainable health care system, we have no choice but to value health and invest more in creating conditions that support physical and mental wellness.

I'll leave you with this thought... since the early 1900s, the average lifespan of Canadians has increased by more than 30 years... 25 of those years are the result of advances in public health such as:

- Safer and healthier foods
- Universal immunization programs
- Tobacco control strategies
- Motor vehicle safety
- Safer workplaces; and
- Taking concrete actions to address the social determinants of health.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, we increased our lifespan; in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the goal should be to improve the quality of those years. In order to do so, we need strategic, upstream investments that will make the biggest difference for future generations.

Budget 2017 is a step in the right direction.

Thank you.