

## **Brain Research Centre Expansion**

**The Honourable Colin Hansen, Minister of Health Services**

**January 22, 2004**

*Check Against Delivery*

Our health care system is facing enormous challenges both now and looking ahead to the future. We have a population that is not just growing rapidly – and especially in Vancouver you see this on a daily basis – but our population is also aging rapidly. In fact, those over the age of 90 are our fastest growing age group in the province. We expect that age group to grow by 40% in the next 3 and a half years. And within a few years we'll be talking about those over 100 as the fastest growing age group in British Columbia.

The demographic is changing, and we are facing lots of challenges today to ensure that we're prepared for as the baby boomers hit those high health consumption years in their latter life. BC and Ontario are taking the lead amongst all provinces, in planning collectively for the aging demographics and to identify key areas where further planning is required.

And one of those key areas we need to plan for is around diseases of the brain. Because while these diseases can strike at any time in a person's life, the truth is that we are living longer and healthier lives in this province, and inevitably, our aging population will be impacted by these diseases with increasing regularity. Stroke is already the leading cause of disability and the third leading cause of death in Canada, and experts tell us that number will double within the next 10 years. My friend, Ed Kry, who's with the Heart and Stroke Foundation here, could probably add a lot more to those stats.

Mental illness, and in particular depression, causes the greatest economic impact of any disease in Canada. 250,000 Canadians suffer from Alzheimer's and I also know that the Alzheimer's Society is represented here today. And Parkinson's disease as well, where 100,000 suffer from that illness and we expect those numbers to triple in the next 20 years. Glaucoma, macular degeneration and hearing loss claim similar projections into the future.

All of this adds up to costs of over \$30 billion annually throughout Canada.

And so the study of these diseases makes the Brain Research Centre so pivotal in our province and in all of Canada, making sure that we are preparing for the futures that our health care system will have to deal with. Through research, the Brain Research Centre continues to undertake investigation of the human brain – in both sickness and health.

If we can improve the quality of lives for people who have suffered a form of brain injury we can alleviate some of their frustration, and we can alleviate the pressure on their families that they have to endure. And if we can figure out some of the mysteries that surround these diseases, we might be able to prevent these diseases in the future. And that in turn, will alleviate some of the pressure that our health care system is going to face in the years to come.

In these days when the system is maxed to the fullest, and that wasn't a reference to this Max, but when it is maxed out, when even the significant increases we make to the health care budget every year are swallowed up so quickly – in the middle of all that we cannot forget that prevention and research are key to creating a sustainable health care system.

And so we must continue to encourage & support this type of Centre of Excellence in British Columbia – so that we not only have the best research available to us – but we can use the Centre to attract specialists, as were mentioned earlier, from all over the world who are eager and willing to come here to study and to contribute.

Under the leadership of Max Cynader the Centre has a proven track record of using a multidisciplinary approach, and the cooperation between the researchers, physicians and technicians will ensure that every inch of new space will be used to its fullest, and Max was lobbying me before we came in here the point that the space is being used up real fast and even though the Centre is still new, it's still going to need additional space in order to capitalize on the real successes it has.

Max, I congratulate you and your team, and I look forward to working with you and to helping in ways that we can to make sure that this success story builds in the future and that we can truly find some answers for those that come after us.