

**Speech to the Province-Wide Collaborative on Congestive Heart Failure, Final Learning Session and Closing Congress**

**The Honourable Colin Hansen, Minister of Health Services  
May 14, 2004**

*Check Against Delivery*

Thank you. I'm glad to be here with you again today. Almost a full year ago I was here with Sindi Hawkins at our first collaborative on congestive heart failure. Sindi is doing well and she's in good spirits. She's got a perfect match for her bone marrow. I know as a former nurse herself she has always enjoyed being part of your annual convention. I know her thoughts are here, even as our thoughts are with her during this troubling time.

The Premier would have liked to be here today as well, because he's acutely aware of the role of chronic disease management in our health care system. He was part of the group of Premiers who initiated the First Ministers Health Accord in 2003. Part of that Accord addresses the need for renewed emphasis on primary health care and more integrated and effective management of chronic diseases.

Your willingness to apply what you learn in this collaborative is helping us meet some of the recommendations set out in the Accord. And that approach is already improving health care in British Columbia. This collaborative represents an outstanding level of partnership among physicians, other health professionals, pharmaceutical companies, and government.

We all share the same goals when it comes to handling chronic disease – prevention and improved health for British Columbians.

We are moving BC into a new era of health care delivery. We're building a system that prevents illness, promotes healthy living, and teaches all British Columbians how to take responsibility for their own health and wellness. One of our goals is to not only improve the management of chronic diseases, but to actively promote prevention, especially with those who are in high risk groups.

If we can encourage British Columbians to take responsibility for their own health care... if we can get people thinking prevention rather than reaction... and if we can cut down on the amount of chronic disease in the population... we will have a healthier, happier and longer lived population and we'll save valuable resources to put directly back into patient care.

That is why it is so important to tell all British Columbians about the importance of taking responsibility for their own health care. Too often British Columbians use the health care system only when they're ill or injured rather than as a tool for maintaining their personal health. There is that old adage about "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that well-managed congestive heart failure resulted in a 56.2% reduction in hospital readmissions.

If we want to keep our cars running smoothly and efficiently, we take them into the garage regularly for service. We know that that regular maintenance is the key to keeping our cars from suffering breakdown. In the same way, if we go regularly to the doctor and set up a maintenance plan, we stand a much better chance of preventing complications.

This is something everyone in health care can help with by teaching, acting as a resource, and encouraging patients to look to their whole health, whether they are sick or well. With the help of physician-led teams, patients who are at high risk of chronic disease can often be coached to manage their lifestyle in a way that will prevent disease in the future.

Our goal, and one we share with you, is to ensure that patients are always put first. We are beginning to do that more and more in British Columbia, even as we work to control the rising costs of health care.

Just 5% of the population is actually responsible for 30% of health care expenditures. Imagine if we could cut down on chronic disease, and free up some of those resources for other priority needs within the health care system?

Congestive heart failure is one of the leading causes of death in BC and the most common reason for hospitalization of those over the age of 65. And that means, if we can improve the outcomes for congestive heart failure, we'll be doing a great service not just for patients, but for the health care system as well.

We're doing everything we can to support physicians and health authorities as they implement a model of chronic care delivery throughout the province. Our government is committed to providing quality, integrated health services that meet the needs of British Columbians, and we're committed to supporting health care providers in delivering coordinated, improved care for patients and families.

Measuring performance is the key to accountability and transparency. That is why it's so important that all of us – the Ministry, health authorities and clinical teams, have agreed to set targets, measure progress and publish the results. If we can do all of these things, we will be able to invest resources strategically and health care will continue to improve.

Transparency is one of the things that our Premier has been very insistent about from the very beginning. We are achieving transparency as we set targets for congestive heart failure in our Service Plan and report on the outcomes annually.

We want to continue to develop guidelines for best practice across the system with collaboratives in other chronic disease such as diabetes and kidney disease. You are the pioneers. Your success is valuable as we use what we've learned for other areas of chronic disease management.

Collaborative participants have made incredible progress. The health system itself is just beginning to see some of the benefits of changes we've made. We've restructured and streamlined the health authorities and they've implemented three-year plans, which include performance measurements. We've restructured Fair PharmaCare so that all British Columbians have access to drugs in an affordable and fair manner. We've developed Centres of Excellence throughout the province, which have allowed us to bring in specialists to places like Trail and Cranbrook. What we're doing is redesigning a health care system that works for all British Columbians, no matter where they live or what their needs.

BC is leading the country in chronic disease management because of the work of groups like this. We know we can be successful if we continue to develop and implement best practices, and measure the improvements that result.

Healthy individuals make for healthy communities. We want to prevent illness and injury before it happens wherever possible. Proactive health care is the foundation of a good primary health care system.

This collaborative and the work you have done will continue to transform the health care system, and it will transform your patient outcomes in a significant and measurable way. The valuable work that you have done will ultimately help not only patients with Congestive Heart Failure, but also many other patients suffering from chronic disease.

Thank you for joining us in this new approach to tackling a big problem. Thank you for trying out what you've learned within your own clinical practice, and for sharing those results. We look forward to working with physicians in the future on best practices and ways of improving the health care system.

Thank you.