

Dear Mayors, Directors and Delegates to the meeting of LMLGA,

I am writing to you on behalf of the BC Rural Health Network, and with the support of the Lung Transplant Housing Support group and the UBC Centre for Rural Health Research. As we approach the upcoming meeting of the Lower Mainland Local Government Association we ask for your support and your vote to support the resolution R5 'Housing is Healthcare'. The significant challenges posed by the lack of adequate housing for our citizens requiring long-term medical care are escalating, affecting the health outcomes and financial stability of residents across British Columbia, especially those from rural and remote areas.

Recent motions passed by the City of Vancouver, specifically the resolution regarding "Housing is Healthcare" adopted in February 2024, underscore the urgent need for action. The R5 resolution advocates for provincial support to mitigate the burdens faced by British Columbians who must travel for specialized medical treatments. These individuals encounter substantial costs, not only financial but also emotional, stemming from the necessity to secure temporary accommodations far from their homes and support networks.

This initiative aligns with the principles of the Canada Health Act, which emphasizes the accessibility of necessary health services without financial or other barriers.

We must recognize that adequate and accessible housing for medical patients is an integral part of our healthcare system. It is imperative that our discussions at the upcoming meeting include a strong resolution to advocate for provincial policies that support housing for health care. Such policies will significantly reduce the disparities in health outcomes between our urban centers and more isolated communities.

I urge you and your colleagues to consider the profound impact that supportive housing policies can have on the health and well-being of all British Columbians. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that no resident is disadvantaged in accessing necessary medical treatments due to their geographic location or financial status.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I look forward to your support for a resolution that places housing at the forefront of our healthcare policy considerations.

Yours in health and wellness,

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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.

The BCRHN is grateful to live, work, and be in relation with people from across many traditional and unceded territories, covering all regions of British Columbia. We are honoured to live on this land and are committed to reconciliation, decolonization, and building relationships in our communities.



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Whereas every year hundreds of British Columbians are diagnosed with chronic conditions and diseases that necessitate specialized medical treatment requiring long term stays near but not in hospital, there are disparities in health outcomes between rural and urban patients;

And whereas residents of rural and remote communities in British Columbia requiring specialized medical treatment for complex care in urban centres face significant challenges

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including high travel and accommodation costs, the psychosocial impacts of healthcare away from home and community, the loss of income during treatment period, and increasingly limited availability of affordable accommodations, hotel rooms, or short term rentals;

And whereas the Province of British Columbia, reflected in its 2024 mandate, is committed to both improved health care for British Columbians when they need it, and attainable and affordable housing to deliver more homes for people faster:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM advocate for the Provincial Government of British Columbia to alleviate the financial and logistical burdens associated with seeking specialized medical care far from home by developing and implementing comprehensive policies and programs to assist patients needing to travel for healthcare, and ensure that patients have access to affordable, comfortable, and convenient accommodations;

And be it further resolved that UBCM request the Province consider and implement ways to deliver and dedicate subsidized accommodations in and adjacent to large urban health centres specifically purposed for longer term specialized medical treatment.

Comments:

The Resolutions Committee notes that the UBCM membership has considered resolutions which address the transportation challenges faced by medical patients in rural and remote areas to access health care (2020-EB75, 2018-B16, 2014-B9, 2012-B38).

The membership also endorsed resolution 2015-B69 which asked the provincial government to provide support, either through direct funding, initiatives, or policy, to organizations that are undertaking the development of lands and other hard assets in the establishment of rural out-patient accommodation.

The Committee also notes that the membership has supported resolutions seeking improved and more equitable access to health care services in rural and remote areas of the province and funding for medical travel if services are not available near a patient's home (2022-EB15, 2019-B62, 2017-B43, 2016-B44, 2016-B124, 2014-B130, 2013-B43, 2013-B44, 2013-B45, 2013-B46, 2013-B47, 2012-B38, 2012-B39, 2012-B91, 2012-B93, 2012-B103, 2011-B60, 2011-B61, 2010-B43, 2010-B44, 2010-B112, 2009-B148, 2008-B49, 2006-B48, 2006-B50, 2006-B154, 2006-B156, 2005-B146). The UBCM Executive endorsed referred resolution 2020-NR64 which asked the Province for a strategy to expand rural and remote community health care services.

Recommendation: Endorse