Answering the Wake-up Call: CMA’s Public Health Action Plan

CMA submission to the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health

June 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public health system in Canada is delivering on community values for the individual, the community and the nation. The system is designed to provide comprehensive health care delivery, health promotion, disease prevention and health protection. The Canadian public health system is a complex network of public and private sector organizations, including federal, provincial and territorial governments, public health agencies and voluntary health care delivery organizations. The system is characterized by a high degree of decentralization, with responsibilities for public health care and related services usually delegated to lower levels of government. The system is also characterized by a high degree of intersectoral cooperation and coordination, with public health care and related services often provided in partnership with other sectors, including education, social services, and the environment.

In the wake of the SARS epidemic, there is increased awareness of the need for improvements in the public health system. This includes a need for greater integration and coordination of public health care and related services, as well as a need for greater access to information and resources. The CMA recommends that the federal government take a leading role in implementing and supporting the development of a national public health system, including the establishment of a national public health agency. The CMA also recommends that the federal government increase funding for public health care and related services, as well as for research and training in public health.

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