

BULLETIN

## Short-term cuts are no way to reduce costs

December 1, 2009

### **The Report: December 2009 vol.30 num.5**

THE BC GOVERNMENT SAYS TIMES ARE TOUGH; savings must be found and wages must be frozen so that every penny can be used to protect health care services for patients.

Sounds nice, but it doesn't make any sense.

The fact is that this government is cutting deeply into the health services they promised to protect, and furthermore, those cuts aren't going to save money at all.

If Health Minister Kevin Falcon was really serious about saving money in the health care system, he'd take a look at the fiscal impact of the cuts now being announced all over the province.

Consider the impact of cutting funding for Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention, a program that makes breakthroughs with autistic children. This program, profiled in this issue of *The Report*, can release kids from a lifelong sentence of isolation and costly supported living at a cost of about \$70,000 for three or four years. That investment may seem steep, but compare this to the alternative. Studies estimate that it costs about \$2 million dollars to care for an autistic individual over the course of their lives.

Putting aside the human impact of giving a child and their families a shot at life lived to its full potential, funding this program saves money. Why is the government ignoring that?

It's the same with the decision to eliminate the provincial advisory offices for the Infant Development Program, the Aboriginal Development Program and the Supported Child Development Program of BC. These offices provide direct support for parents of young children with developmental needs. Early intervention can make a big difference for these children, and significantly reduce the cost of caring for them in the long term. Any money saved by these cuts will be lost many times over in the immediate future. And that's not counting the cost to families left to fend for themselves.

Cuts to diagnostic services, surgeries and services supporting seniors and people with mental health and addiction issues will also cost the health care system more down the line.

Keeping seniors healthy and connected to their communities keeps them out of expensive and crowded emergency care facilities. Supporting individuals with addictions and mental health problems reduces costs in the court system and prevents more costly health issues.

The list of cuts goes on and on, and you can read about some of them in this issue.

HSA is committed to protecting quality health care for British Columbians, and we believe more people need to know about the gravity of these cuts, and their fiscal impact. That's why we launched an intensive ad campaign in late November and early December. Radio and on-line ads in several languages reached people in every community in BC. And that's just the beginning.

Times are tough, but this isn't the time to abandon the vulnerable. The economy isn't going to be turned around by short term cuts that hurt people and increase long-term costs.

More than ever, it's time to support the vulnerable ... not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it's in the best interest of keeping our health care system affordable and sustainable in the years to come. 

*Reid Johnson is president of the Health Sciences Association of BC.*

Type:

[The Report](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia  
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website  
[www.hsabc.org](http://www.hsabc.org)

Telephone 604-517-0994  
1-800-663-2017