



**DATE:** September 22, 2015

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Trustee Michael Janz

**SUBJECT:** Motion re Wellness Foundation for Alberta

**REFERENCE:** [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)  
[Wellness Alberta Website](#)

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### ISSUE

Notice of motion was served at the September 8, 2015 Board meeting.

### BACKGROUND

Wellness Alberta brings together thousands of individuals including business, health and recreational leaders and non-governmental organizations who support a meaningful investment in the prevention of disease and injuries. Through a sustainable investment in an Alberta Wellness Foundation, Albertans will benefit from improved health outcomes and reduced demands on health care, which will greatly enrich the quality of life for current and future generations.

A number of school boards have already endorsed the Wellness Foundation including the Edmonton and Calgary Catholic school boards. The City Councils of Edmonton and Calgary also provided unanimous support for the proposed Foundation. A list of the current Alberta organizations that have formally endorsed the Wellness Alberta proposal is provided in Attachment I.

### RECOMMENDATION

**That the Edmonton Public School Board, in line with our previous advocacy for initiatives supporting health and wellness promotion and investing in disease and illness prevention, give our conceptual endorsement to supporting a Wellness Foundation for Alberta, as proposed by Wellness Alberta.**

### CONSIDERATIONS & ANALYSIS

The Wellness Foundation is important because it establishes a dedicated focus on prevention in the health care system. Wellness Alberta has proposed that this initiative would be funded through additional taxes on tobacco and alcohol.

What this could mean for district schools is more health promotion and investment in wellness for students at the school level. Programs investing in school nutrition, health and fitness, mental health and dozens of other important initiatives would be prioritized to support students. These investments would contribute to saving Alberta taxpayers millions of dollars annually—resources that could be re-invested in the public education system.

The dollar figure recommended (1% of the Alberta Health Budget) by Wellness Alberta is important because it recognizes the magnitude of the challenge that is investing in health prevention. Because this is funded with new revenue, it would not be coming out of the educational envelope. In the long term, investment in health promotion will save costs on provincial health care expenditures, freeing up more resources for other purposes such as investing in education.

The Wellness Foundation is proposed to be independent of the existing health care system but accountable to the Provincial Government. The Wellness Foundation organizers propose meeting with the Auditor General to establish reporting requirements. While it will take direction from the Legislature, it is important that it remains stand-alone to ensure that wellness and health prevention are sustainable over time, prioritized and isolated from the continued needs of the acute-care system. Transformation takes time and dedicated effort and cannot be done if prevention efforts are being short-changed by other important health priorities. The Wellness Foundation would be accountable to the Alberta Legislature, similar to other agencies.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Pending approval of the recommendation, a letter of endorsement from the Edmonton Public School Board of the Wellness Foundation as proposed by Wellness Alberta will be sent.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- ATTACHMENT I - [Current List of Organizational Endorsements](#)
- ATTACHMENT II - [Endorsement Form for Wellness Foundation](#)
- ATTACHMENT III - [Wellness Alberta Overview: Wellness Foundation Policy Recommendations](#)
- ATTACHMENT IV - [August 24, 2015 Blog Post](#) by Michael Janz: Alberta Needs a Wellness Foundation

MJ:mmf



### Current Organizational Endorsements

*The following Alberta organizations have formally endorsed the Wellness Alberta proposal to secure a well-financed, sustainable Wellness Foundation that will operate independently of the health care system.*

*This list is updated regularly as the list of supporters is growing rapidly and currently represents over 3.5 million Albertans!*

Action on Smoking & Health	Conference Board of Canada
Alberta Blue Cross	County of Lethbridge
Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities (ACHSC)	County of Northern Lights
Alberta Centre for Active Living	Edmonton Catholic Schools
Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research	Edmonton North Primary Care Network
Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors	Ever Active Schools
Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists	Foundation for the Future Charter Academy
Alberta College of Family Physicians	Grant MacEwan University-Aboriginal Education Centre
Alberta Continuing Care Association	Growing Food Security in Alberta (GSFA)
Alberta Food Matters (AFM)	Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)
Alberta Medical Association	Heart and Stroke Foundation
Alberta Motor Association (AMA)	High Prairie School Division (#48)
Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association	Lung Association of Alberta & NWT
Alberta Pharmacists' Association (APA)	Leduc-Beaumont-Devon Primary Care Network
Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention (APCCP)	Max Bell Foundation
Alberta Public Health Association	Medicine Hat Family YMCA
Alberta Recreation and Parks Association	Mount Royal University
Alberta Schools Athletic Association	Mount Royal University - Health Services & Optimal Therapies Clinic
Alberta Teachers' Association	Mount Royal University - Recreation
Arthur J.E. Child Foundation	MS Society of Canada - AB & NWT Division
Beaver County	Municipal District of Taber
Boys and Girls Clubs - Western Region	Native Counselling Services of Alberta
Calgary Catholic School District	Norlien Foundation
Calgary Rural Primary Care Network	Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) -Athletics and Recreation
Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta (CSFA)	'NSTEP (Nutrition, Students, Teachers Exercising with Parents)
Canadian Cancer Society, AB/NWT Division	Onoway High School
Canadian Diabetes Association AB/NWT	Parkland County
Canadian Institute of Natural and Integrative Medicine	Policy, Location and Access in Community Environments (PLACE) Research Lab
Canadian Paraplegic Association - AB	Promoting Optimal Weights through Ecological Research (POWER) Lab
Cardel Place	Red Deer College - Department of Kinesiology & Sport Studies
Catholic Central High School	Royal Life Saving Society Canada - AB/NWT Branch
Chrysalis: An Alberta Society for Citizens with Disabilities	Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere (SHAPE)
City of St. Albert	Saffron Centre Ltd
City of Edmonton	Sport Medicine Council of Alberta
City of Calgary	
City of Leduc	
City of Red Deer	
City of Medicine Hat	

Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists  
St. John Ambulance - Alberta Council  
Strathcona County  
The Support Network  
Town of Beaumont  
Town of Black Diamond  
Town of Bruderheim  
Town of Coalhurst  
Town of Coronation  
Town of Okotoks  
Town of Picture Butte  
Town of Pincher Creek  
Town of Smoky Lake  
Town of Two Hills  
Town of Wembley  
Trico Charitable Foundation  
University of Alberta - Centre for Health  
Promotion Studies

University of Alberta - Faculty of Physical  
Education & Recreation  
University of Alberta - School of Public Health  
University of Alberta - Students' Union  
University of Calgary - Faculty of Kinesiology  
Village of Barnwell  
Village of Breton  
Village of Chipman  
Village of Clyde  
Village of Consort  
Village of Hussar  
Village of Longview  
Werklund Foundation  
Wolf Creek Public Schools  
YMCA Calgary  
YMCA Lethbridge  
YMCA Northern Region  
YMCA Wood Buffalo

**C**hronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability in Alberta and has a major impact on the physical, mental and economic health of all residents. The good news is that over 40% of these diseases can be prevented by taking action to reduce risk factors including tobacco and alcohol use, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.

Promoting positive mental health also helps prevent chronic disease. Taking action to prevent

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adverse childhood experiences reduces risk for mental illness and chronic diseases later in life.

Adults living with mental illness have a higher risk of developing chronic health conditions, and people suffering from chronic disease are twice as likely to experience depression and anxiety compared to others. Similarly, supporting action to reduce or eliminate risks for injury and chronic disability will reduce risk for chronic diseases and improve quality of life.

Unfortunately, the Alberta Government is spending more than ever before on acute health care, with the majority spent on treating and managing these diseases and conditions.

### Statement of Support

We, the undersigned, support the efforts of Wellness Alberta and believe the Alberta Government should establish a Wellness Foundation in Alberta, which is:

- ✓ Well-Financed (initial investment of \$50 million annually, increasing over 3 to 5 years to an amount equivalent to at least 1 percent of the health care budget or \$170 million annually).
- ✓ Sustained and protected by legislation; and,
- ✓ Functions independently of the acute health care system to maintain financial autonomy, accountability and transparency.

Organization

Name/Title of authorized representative

Email and Phone

☐ We want to receive campaign updates

\*Signature

Date

*\* Signing this document reflects your endorsement and will be shared on [www.wellnessalberta.ca](http://www.wellnessalberta.ca) and with public and government stakeholders.*

Please sign and return this statement by fax or email to:

Fax: 780.492.0364  
Email: [info@wellnessalberta.ca](mailto:info@wellnessalberta.ca)

**Wellness  
Alberta** 

It's about  
**Health**  
It's about  
**Time**



Take action to prevent chronic disease...  
Support a **Wellness Foundation** for Alberta.

**Wellness  
Alberta** 

**P**revention and health promotion are chronically underfunded in Alberta; currently equivalent to approximately 3 percent of the total budget spent on health.

Alberta needs to make new, long-term investments in disease prevention and wellness promotion to improve health outcomes, protect our economic productivity and ensure a high quality of life for all Albertans, now and in the future.

A Wellness Foundation is an innovative and effective model that will ensure new investments:

- are protected from the demands of acute care funding needs; and,
- are committed in the long-term to evidence-based prevention and health promotion strategies.

Each

**\$1**

invested in  
prevention &  
health promotion  
can be expected to  
result in  
at least

**\$4**  
**Savings**

in future acute  
care costs

A Wellness Foundation must be **well-financed, sustainable** and **independent of the health care system** in order to maximize the impact on Albertan's physical, mental and economic health.

**A Wellness Foundation:**

- Must focus on evidence-based, primary prevention initiatives to address six major modifiable risk factors (physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, tobacco use, alcohol misuse, adverse childhood experiences and injury).
- Should be created by an Act of the Legislative Assembly and report directly to the Assembly each year.
- Should be governed by an independent board comprised of key stakeholders that are selected by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly.
- Should function independently of the acute health care system to maintain financial autonomy, accountability and transparency.
- Initial investment of \$50 million annually, increasing over 3 to 5 years to an amount equivalent of at least 1 percent of the total health care budget, or \$170 million annually.
- Could derive funding from the Government's general revenue or from a special "wellness levy" funded by modest mark-ups on alcohol and tobacco products.



For more information about how a Wellness Foundation can promote and protect the wellness of children, adults, families and communities in Alberta, please see our website: [www.wellnessalberta.ca](http://www.wellnessalberta.ca).





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APRIL 2013

### Overview: Wellness Foundation Policy Recommendations

Wellness Alberta is very concerned about the chronic disease epidemic in Alberta. Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability in Alberta and it has a major impact on the physical, mental and economic health of all residents. The good news is that over 40% of these diseases can be prevented by taking action to reduce risk factors including tobacco and alcohol use, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.

#### Wellness Alberta Recommends:

- *Establish a Wellness Foundation to transform the health and quality of life of all Albertans.*
- *The Wellness Foundation must be **well-financed, sustainable** and operate **independent** of the health care system.*
- *The Wellness Foundation must **focus on primary prevention** to address major **modifiable risk factors** for chronic disease.*

Protecting mental health by preventing adverse childhood experiences and reducing risk for injury and disability is also crucial to preventing chronic disease. Unfortunately, the Alberta Government is spending more than ever before on acute health care, with the majority (over 90%) spent on treating and managing preventable disease and disability.

Wellness Alberta believes Alberta needs to make new, long-term and sustainable investments in preventing disease and promoting health to reduce the burden on our health care system and improve our quality of life. Alberta needs a Wellness Foundation.

To maximize the impact on the physical, mental and economic health of Albertans, the Wellness Foundation must be **well-financed, sustainable** and **independent** of the health care system. The Foundation will **focus on primary prevention** initiatives to **address six major modifiable risk factors** including physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, tobacco use, alcohol misuse, adverse childhood experiences and injury.

- We recommend that the Foundation be announced in August 2013 and initiate operation in April 2014.
- We propose the Foundation be initially financed through an annual grant of \$50M, increasing to at least \$170M annually (representing an amount equivalent to at least 1% of the Alberta Health budget) over a 3-5 year period.
- The Foundation funding must be new investments that are in addition to Government's current overall investment in prevention and health promotion and must not be reallocated out of existing health budgets.
- New investments can be derived from the Alberta Government's general revenue fund or by the creation of a "Wellness Levy" funded by modest mark-ups on alcohol and tobacco products.
- Stable, long-term funding dedicated to prevention and health promotion is a good value for money: a one dollar investment can be expected to result in a minimum \$4-5 cost savings in future acute health care expenditures. However, some large scale interventions have been shown to produce a return-of-investment of up to 50:1.
- The Foundation will ensure new investments are directed to evidence-based strategies and sustained over the long-term to improve the health of Albertans and reduce the burden of chronic disease and disability on our health care system.
- The Foundation must function independently of the acute health care system to maintain financial autonomy, accountability and transparency.
- The Foundation should be created by an Act of the Legislative Assembly and report directly to the Assembly each year.
- The Foundation should be governed by an independent board comprised of key stakeholders that are selected by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly.

For more information about what a *Wellness Foundation* could do to promote and protect the wellness of children, adults, families and communities in Alberta, please see our website [www.wellnessalberta.ca](http://www.wellnessalberta.ca).

# Alberta Needs A Wellness Foundation

[Excerpt from August 24, 2015 Michael Janz Blog Post](#)

I believe our province needs to shift our healthcare system towards a greater focus on disease prevention.

I also believe that prevention efforts must focus on our most formative years: [the early years](#) and our K-12 education system. Healthy children grow up to be healthy Albertans. There is only one tax dollar, and dollars spent treating preventable diseases, are dollars not available to invest in our school system. If we can shift our system to be more proactive and preventative, we will see significant cost savings that could be invested in other areas, such as K-12 education.

At our September 8th Public Board Meeting I will be giving notice of motion that our board join the chorus of other advocate organizations, municipalities, and school boards calling for the establishment of a Wellness Foundation as outlined by Wellness Alberta.

I believe that a Wellness Foundation would be of significant interest to our School board because of the potential future investments in health promotion in our school system. Lifelong habits are formed during the school years, and I hope that as a school district can be a supportive partner in turning the (healthy) learners of today into the (healthy) leaders of tomorrow.

As a school district, we already are partners in reducing tobacco use. We have eliminated the sale of junk food from our schools. We are working on numerous programs that increase physical activity. We are partners in drug and alcohol programs. We are continuing to increase our focus on the early years and supporting those students at the greatest risk or who are entering our school system with the greatest needs. The Wellness Alberta proposed Wellness Foundation is aligned with our mission, vision, and priorities.

Click [here](#) to see the full blog post.