

June 12, 2008

Hon. Ronald Liepert
Minister, Alberta Health and Wellness
#323 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Ave NW
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Liepert:

RE: Audit of Regional Health Authorities Highlights Shortage of Public Health Inspectors

In recent news articles entitled, *"Rural health regions ailing; Audit finds patient safety risks, rogue community hospitals"* (Edmonton Journal, June 6/08); *"Health inspector shortage puts Peace region at potential risk"* (Edmonton Journal, January 26/08); *"Audit spotlights floundering system"* (Calgary Herald, June 6/08), have echoed the summation of an audit completed by Deloitte in 2006 and 2007. These articles point to real and identifiable issues observed by the auditor that create potential health risks to Albertans. Specifically, the audits found that in the Northern Lights, East Central, Peace Country and Palliser regions, shortages of health inspectors, rising public health workloads and a lack of adherence to food safety standards pose "significant potential risks" to Albertans.

CIPHI Alberta believes that health protection is one of the cornerstones of public health. As you are aware, Public Health Inspectors and Environmental Health Officers are the professionals appointed to protect the health of the public in Alberta. They are trusted to consistently ensure safe environments, safe air, safe water, and safe food through assessments, inspections and investigations. These professionals undertake advanced educational training and are nationally certified to ensure the highest level of service and competence possible. With the continuing upward population growth in Alberta, it is imperative to ensure that the public facilities Albertans use and the environments in which Albertans live in receive the expected amount of attention.

As such, CIPHI Alberta believes that Albertans should not have to compromise their expected standards of public health because of economically prosperous times. Furthermore, to rationalize these identified potential risks to the public by waiting for the system to "catch up" is a dangerous precedent. As the

Government of Alberta embarks on the restructuring of the health care system under the newly formed Alberta Health Services Board, we would urge that support be given to rural and urban areas to recruit and retain Public Health Inspectors and Environmental Health Officers. It is our opinion that these Environmental Public Health Professionals (EHPs) can play an important role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of Alberta's health care system.

A position statement reflecting the contents of this letter has also been posted on our website at www.ciphi.ab.ca. If you require further information or clarification or would like to discuss this matter, please do not hesitate to contact us at (780)907-8698 or via email at president@ciphi.ab.ca.

Respectfully,

(original signed)

Phi Phan, BSc, CPHI(C)
President

