



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA

January 27, 2017

Dr. David Swann, MLA

Calgary-Mountain View Constituency

The Honourable Sarah Hoffman
Minister of Health
423 Legislature Building
10800 - 97th Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Hoffman:

I am writing to express concerns about the steep decline in provincial funding for the Injury Prevention Centre at the University of Alberta.

It has been brought to my attention that the Injury Prevention Centre's funding was reduced last year from \$1,585,500 to \$1 million – a dramatic cut of nearly 37 per cent, and one that would have a detrimental impact on the operations of any not-for-profit organization. I was also informed that, prior to that, the Centre's budget had remained stagnant for close to ten years.

I have discussed with you the undeniable value of injury and illness prevention and can, from my experience as a former medical officer of health, attest to the tremendous benefits they yield both in terms of health and wellness promotion and reducing health care and economic costs. The simple fact is that for every public dollar we spend on prevention initiatives, the return on investment is many times greater. It is for that reason that I believe cutting the already limited funding that the Injury Prevention Centre receives is incredibly short-sighted and will likely end up costing the Alberta government even more money in the long run.

In spite of its relatively modest budget, the Injury Prevention Centre has been able to undertake a broad range of effective and cost-efficient initiatives and accomplished much. However, there is a limit to how far creativity and sheer force of will can take an organization when funding starts to dry up, and I submit that the cuts will seriously hamper the Centre's operations going forward – perhaps even challenging its viability. If the goal in this case is to try to rein in spending through targeted health care cuts, I would suggest that the focus should be elsewhere.

As you are aware, Finance Minister Joe Ceci recently sought feedback from Opposition MLAs relative to priorities and suggestions for Budget 2017. In that spirit, I would encourage you to reinstate or at least boost funding for the Injury Prevention Centre so that it can continue its valuable work unimpeded.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Swann, Leader
Alberta Liberal Opposition