

January 30, 2003
Premier Gordon Campbell,
Parliament Buildings,
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Premier Campbell:

You may be aware that some years ago North Vancouver District Council submitted a resolution to the U.B.C.M. in an effort to make Preventive Health Care, as provided by local government controlled recreation facilities, an integral part of the Health Care System.

Statistics show that 40% of all doctor visits are stress related. Most of these ailments could be alleviated by non-medical treatment through exercising rather than through medication prescribed by doctors. This method of preventive health care is widespread in Europe and is saving taxpayers in those countries billions of dollars. When it becomes obvious to a doctor that the patient requires nothing more than a regular exercise program suited to his or her particular condition, the doctor refers the patient to a bona fide recreation facility, private or public. When the exercise program is completed, the patient returns the original prescription to his doctor. With an upper limit, the expenses arising to the patient are tax deductible. By way of example, an annual pass to one of the public recreation facilities in the Lower Mainland is rarely over \$ 300 per annum. Seniors may pay less. On the other hand, for many seniors and low income families any kind of expenditure is a financial burden and consequently, is a disincentive to embrace supervised exercising.

In some countries the scenario is even simpler. Expenses with an upper limit arising to a client for frequenting a bona fide exercise facility, private or public, are tax deductible even without a doctor referral .

Canadian statistics show that for every dollar invested in this form of preventive health care, the health care system saves \$7.00 in actual health care costs. In a period when our health care system suffers from chronic funding shortages and is in a state of financial crisis, this approach is surely attractive.

The idea is relatively simple and inexpensive yet highly effective. Such a program, of course, is only effective in urban areas where local government and/or even the private sector provide such facilities. On the other hand, the majority of British Columbians do live in cities and municipalities where such facilities public and/or private do exist, making such a scenario eminently practical and cost effective.

I hope that you will give this proposal serious consideration and I look forward to your positive reply. The potential savings to the government could be substantial.

Yours very truly,

Ernie Crist, Councillor,
District of North Vancouver

Campbell recr.