

Dr. John Millar
Executive Director
Population Health Surveillance
Provincial Health Services Authority, British Columbia



Dr. Millar is the Executive Director, Population. In this capacity, Dr Millar works in close collaboration with PHSA agencies and other provincial stakeholders, providing leadership and technical expertise in developing strategies for health surveillance, and identifying population health trends and opportunities for enhancing chronic disease prevention and management. Previously he served as VP, Research & Population Health for the Canadian Institute for Health Information in Ottawa; and as the Provincial Health Officer in BC.

Dr Millar currently serves as the Chair of the National Advisory Board for the National Collaborating Centre for the Determinants of Health and the Co-Chair of the F/P/T Task Group on Surveillance of Chronic Disease and Injury. Recently, Dr. Millar was appointed to a two year term on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute. In BC, Dr Millar Chairs the BC Healthy Built Environment Alliance, the BC Obesity Reduction Task Force and the BC Health Inequities Coalition. He also Co-Chairs the Population & Public Health Evidence & Data Expert Group and is a member of the BC Health Officers Council, the BC Healthy Living Alliance and the BC Population Health Network.

Dr. Millar was born in Vancouver and graduated in Medicine from the University of British Columbia He has a background of international health experience, having spent two years with the Zambian Flying Doctor Service and ten years as a Medical Officer and Assistant Secretary for Health in Papua-New Guinea. His interest in third world health problems continues and in recent years he has worked on projects in Laos, Trinidad, Brazil, Kosovo, Transcaucasia and Uganda.

Prosperity & Wellbeing: Health Inequities & the Social Determinants of Health

In all provinces across Canada we face a growing burden of chronic disease. All the major chronic diseases are increasing in prevalence: diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, cancer, musculoskeletal disease and mental health problems. This increasing burden of chronic disease, along with aging and the increasing costs of human resources, drugs and technology are causing unsustainable increases in health spending in all provincial budgets. As a result, other government spending priorities such as education, early child development, housing, transport, economic development and welfare are being squeezed out. This rising burden of chronic disease also means that overall population health is being eroded with the result that economic productivity and growth are being eroded. Canada's overall productivity has been declining and we are now ranked low among OECD countries.

Most of the burden of chronic disease is borne by those who are economically disadvantaged and marginalized and have been unable to reach their full potential. This is why the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health has stated that social injustice is killing millions of people.

Addressing health inequities and the underlying social injustices will require a 'whole of society' and 'all of government' approach at all levels of organisation. It will be necessary to bring to the table not only all government ministries, but major private sector organisations as well as civil society and the philanthropic foundations.

It is proposed in BC to bring together these stakeholders on a 'Prosperity & Well-being' Agenda. This would be a cooperative, inclusive partnership designed to improve the wealth and health of *all* citizens. This agenda will have several pillars:

1. Improve labour market attachment – investing in literacy, education and skills training as well as financial incentives for those who are most vulnerable and precarious in the labour market.
2. Create jobs – through innovation, entrepreneurship and investments such as microfinance.
3. Increase productivity – equipping a generation for competing in an international knowledge-based economy through early child development & education, innovation and improved workplace wellness programs.
4. Restoring the social fabric – 'a strong social fabric is an essential component of economic prosperity'¹, not only for reasons of social justice but also to create a well-educated workforce¹. This requires consideration of such issues as food and income security for those that are unable to work, access to child development resources, education, literacy, affordable housing and the built environment.

The recent Canadian success with the Olympics has shown that public/private/philanthropic partnerships have powerful potential; let us realize that potential to improve health and productivity to gain prosperity for all.

¹ The Conference Board of Canada. Mission Possible Executive Summary: Sustainable Prosperity for Canada. 2007
U:\Prosperity (take 2).doc