



## Helping healthy living 2

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**We first brought up this** topic by talking about the health decisions we are each called on to make. Whether

we realize it or not, we make decisions about our health, even if that decision is “not to get off the sofa” all day. If our decision-making can be influenced by having “good” decisions be the easiest to make, then perhaps we could be on our way to a more healthy society.

A new and prominent effort is now under way to make British Columbians healthier. The call to make us a healthier province by the time our Olympics roll around in 2010 comes from a report produced by the BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA) called “The Winning Legacy.”

The BCHLA was formed in 2003 by more than a dozen organizations who were all working on improving the health of British Columbians. Some of its members include the BC Lung Association, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Diabetes Association, Heart & Stroke Foundation, Public Health Association of BC, local and provincial governments, and the Regional Health Authorities.

The BCHLA’s focus is on promoting physical activity, healthy eating and living smoke-free. While there are many chronic diseases, the initial focus is on the common risk factors that contribute significantly to cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes. These are: physical inactivity, poor dietary habits, tobacco use and obesity.

“The Winning Legacy” promotes wellness and supports the prevention of chronic disease. Collaboration between and among stakeholders (that includes you and me as citizens, local organizations, businesses... pretty much all of us) is an important part of the plan as communities (whatever your definition) are encouraged to join in both spirit and practice.

The need to take action could not be more evident. In British Columbia, about 1,200,000 people suffer from one or more chronic conditions — prolonged, disabling and rarely curable. The most promising fact is that a large proportion of the chronic disease burden in BC is preventable.

The scourge of tobacco is well: 80% of lung cancers and almost 90% of chronic bronchitis and emphysema are caused by smoking. Less recognized are statistics on other chronic diseases: 20% or more of cases of type 2 diabetes, stroke, coronary heart disease and colon cancer result simply from a sedentary lifestyle. The risk of cardiovascular disease drops by 28% just by following the Canada Health Guide for eating vegetables and fruit. Or how about being obese more than doubling your risk of dying early, and losing on average seven years of life?!

Some of the recommendations from The Winning Legacy include: implementing consistent smoke-free legislation across the province; lobbying pharmacies

***Make the healthy decision the easy decision — what can you do about it?***

to stop selling tobacco; introducing school-based interventions such as Action Schools! BC to help kids be more active; and partnering with unions, employers, businesses and government to create healthier work environments and supports.

Taken all together, these actions guarantee that we can make the easy decision be the healthy one. After all, if there is a walking group that meets each lunch hour at the office, wouldn’t that be easy to join in? Make the healthy decision the easy decision — what can you do about it?