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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INCOME AND HEALTH

According to a recent report about income-related health inequalities in Canada, on a national level we collectively spend more than \$200 billion a year on publicly funded health care. Here in British Columbia our health care is almost 50 per cent of our provincial budget. But despite all this spending, those who are richer enjoy better health and live longer than those who are poor.

Our health is most impacted by social determinants – things like stable housing, having a job, access to education, and a steady income can make us healthier. It's all connected - if you have a job and a steady income, you are more likely to be able to find the resources to improve your education or the education of your children. With an advanced education, you are more likely to have a higher income and be able to afford safe and stable housing. If you have affordable housing, you are less likely to have to choose between buying healthy food and paying the rent and that means you can eat a healthier diet.

Health indicators like obesity, smoking rates, and child mortality paint a picture of two different worlds – the poorest Canadians are challenged by these problems much more than those who are economically advantaged.

Universal health care, like we have in Canada, is a cornerstone to a more equitable society in terms of access to health care. We can also help decrease health inequities by investing in affordable housing, improving access to education, and supporting poverty reduction planning programs in our communities.

After all, every person matters.