

July 4, 2001

Dr. Tom Traves
President
Dalhousie University
Halifax, NS B3H 3J5

Mr. Rick Nurse
Chief Executive Officer
IWK Health Centre
Halifax, NS B3J 3G9

Dear Dr. Traves and Mr. Nurse:

As co-chairs of the Steering Committee for the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (MCEWH), we are focusing the energies of the committee this year towards sustainability of the work of MCEWH for the next five years. In September 2001, we will meet to deliberate on sustainability options and plans for the future. At present, the Centre is scheduled to close in 8 months when its current funding envelope comes to an end March 31, 2002. We are writing to you as key contributors in the current successes of the Centre to apprise you of our intent to ensure a sustained presence for the work of the Centre in Atlantic Canada.

As we move into the next phase of the Centre's work, it is essential to expand our research funding base and partnerships. We also need to know that you as our founding partners will continue your current levels of support as the Centre moves forward. At present, the IWK Health Centre provides office space, furnishings, utilities and Information Technology support. Dalhousie provides the services of Research Services, Financial Services, Public Relations, and 15% of the Director's salary. We are interested to know whether you see opportunities within your respective organizations to cost share and/or enable the Centre to access permanent funding for the Director.

In 1996, Health Canada provided national leadership in launching a Women's Health Strategy and the Centres of Excellence on Women's Health Program (CEWHP). The goal was to redress the needs and priorities of women's health research particularly on the social and economic determinants of health. With funding of \$12 million over five years, the CEWHP, consisting of 5 national centres and the Canadian Women's Health Network, has significantly increased the

capacity for research on women's health and dissemination of knowledge about gender differences in health in over 250 projects. In Atlantic Canada, MCEWH has generated a dynamic network of 1500 research organizations and researchers. In a short period of time, it has captured a significant degree of credibility with its policy and community target audiences in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, as is nationally recognized as a leader in gender and home care research.

MCEWH has supported over 80 small scale projects in Atlantic Canada, and attracted \$6.5 million in public research dollars. The Centre participated in a mid program review in 2000 and in April 2001 the national CEWHP program received an additional \$1.7 million from Health Canada to facilitate transition and renewal. The Centre has provided the lead on several national research initiatives including international and national workshops and conferences, a national "think tank on home care", and several cross centre research initiatives e.g. International Summer Institute proposal for Gender, Health and HIV/AIDS with the Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa. The Centre's leadership has resulted in more local research opportunities and employment generation, graduate student placements and collaboration with community on research priorities. MCEWH represents one of the few research platforms which foster capacity building and networking among researchers, community groups, the academy, clinical researchers and the emerging CIHR. The work of the Centre has also attracted a \$1.7 million Canadian Institutes of Health Research award to study home care in Nova Scotia and a \$1.6 million anonymous donation to create the Elizabeth May Chair in Women's Health and the Environment.

MCEWH has attracted and retained a world class director, Carol Amaratunga, whose leadership has brought the work of the Centre to national and international attention. This summer researchers from Ireland, Germany and Finland are visiting the Centre to examine our model of collaborative community based research and social inclusion policy projects. A team from the Center is working with the Commonwealth Secretariat on an international publication to address Gender and HIV/AIDS as well as with health policy economists and gender analysis researchers at Massey University, New Zealand and the South Pacific Commission, New Caledonia.

Our plans for sustainability and extension of the Centre's work include advocacy for Health Canada's continued attention to women's health; prospecting for regional economic development opportunities and capital funds, as well as examining the availability and utility of private sector research grants.

Atlantic Canada represents an excellent site for research on the impact of social and economic conditions on the health of the diverse populations in our region. MCEWH has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to lever research investments and to build local research capacity. We are confident that the Centre will continue to be successful in capturing external research funding. To achieve ongoing success your personal support and the ongoing commitment of the two founding institutions is essential in maintaining a vibrant research secretariat. Without your support the Centre would not have been able to achieve its present level of success.

We look forward to building upon and expanding on our success. On behalf of our Atlantic Canada Steering Committee, we welcome your continued commitment for sustaining the

Centre's program and local research efforts.

Sincerely,

Sandy Bentley
Co Chair (Prince Edward Island)

Joan Kingston
Co Chair (New Brunswick)

cc: MCEWH Steering Committee
Jeannita Bernard, PEI
Katherine Kelly, PEI
Bonnie James, NF
Dorothy Robbins, NF
Claudia Simon, NB
Mary Simpson, NB
Judith Hockney, NS
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