



File: 0110.20

January 26, 2023

Via Email: [HLTH.Health@gov.bc.ca](mailto:HLTH.Health@gov.bc.ca)

Honourable Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health and Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs  
PO Box 9050 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Dix:

**Re: Support for Access BC – Prescription Contraception**

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At a meeting held January 9, 2023 District of Highlands Council resolved as follows:

*“That the District of Highlands write to the Provincial Government to urge that all prescription contraception be universally available at no cost under the Medical Services Plan”.*

The District of Highlands respectfully requests that the Government of British Columbia consider all prescription contraception be available at no cost as recommended by Access BC's enclosed correspondence.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Ken Williams, Mayor  
District of Highlands

Enclosure

**From:** Jessica Jimmo

**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2022 1:49:55 PM

**To:** [leslie.corvidconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:leslie.corvidconsulting@gmail.com) <[leslie.corvidconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:leslie.corvidconsulting@gmail.com)>; [ann@eco-sense.ca](mailto:ann@eco-sense.ca) <[ann@eco-sense.ca](mailto:ann@eco-sense.ca)>; [gord.baird@gmail.com](mailto:gord.baird@gmail.com) <[gord.baird@gmail.com](mailto:gord.baird@gmail.com)>; [marciemclean@shaw.ca](mailto:marciemclean@shaw.ca) <[marciemclean@shaw.ca](mailto:marciemclean@shaw.ca)>; [karel@roessong.com](mailto:karel@roessong.com) <[karel@roessong.com](mailto:karel@roessong.com)>; [rose26@telus.net](mailto:rose26@telus.net) <[rose26@telus.net](mailto:rose26@telus.net)>; [kwilliams@highlands.ca](mailto:kwilliams@highlands.ca) <[kwilliams@highlands.ca](mailto:kwilliams@highlands.ca)>

**Subject:** AccessBC needs your help!

Dear Members of Highlands Council,

My name is Jessica L. Jimmo, I am a volunteer and reaching out on behalf of AccessBC. We are a grassroots, province-wide campaign that advocates for universal no-cost prescription contraception in British Columbia. AccessBC was founded in 2017, and is made up of a team of amazing volunteers from across the province.

**I am writing to you today in order to ask, if your municipality would be willing to step up and call on the provincial government to make all prescription contraception universally available at no cost? A colleague of mine, Teale Phelps Bondar, said that there might be interest with the Highland District Council.**

Offering no-cost prescription contraception to all British Columbians is:

- **Good social policy:** Removing all barriers to accessing contraception is a powerful affirmation of gender equality, and specifically of the right of all people to determine for themselves when and whether to become pregnant and bear children.
- **Good health policy:** Universal access to prescription contraception will improve health outcomes for parents and infants by reducing the risks associated with unintended pregnancy, particularly among adolescents, and will maximize the health benefits and outcomes of preparing for planned pregnancy.
- **Good economic policy:** The investment required to provide universal access to prescription contraceptives will yield significant returns in reduced public expenditures.

### **Why is removing barriers to contraception so important?**

Access to contraception is recognized as a [basic human right](#). However, there are currently significant barriers preventing people from accessing prescription contraception in BC. Canadian contraceptive care providers identify cost as the single most important barrier that Canadians face when trying to access contraception.

Unequal access to prescription contraception can lead to unintended pregnancies, which can derail life plans and come with high personal, professional, and economic costs. These pregnancies also increase the likelihood of negative short and long-term health outcomes for both the mother and child, and come with significant costs to our health and social services. Barrier-free access to reliable forms of contraception substantially reduces the chance of unintended pregnancies.

An intrauterine device (IUD) can cost between \$80 - \$400, oral contraceptive pills \$240 - \$500 per year, the Nuvaring \$350 a year and hormone injections can cost as much as \$180 per year. Such costs represent a significant barrier, particularly to people faced with relational violence or low incomes and youth or people from equity-seeking communities.

While there are a small number of provincial programs in place that support access to contraception, these programs are largely income-dependent. Cumbersome application processes and paperwork discourage the use of these programs and represent additional barriers for people who are often already vulnerable, time-poor, or unable to navigate complex bureaucracies without additional assistance.

The current COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of the gig-economy has magnified existing barriers to accessing contraception in our healthcare system, especially exacerbating the impact of cost. The pandemic has caused sweeping layoffs or cuts to hours, especially in “pink-collar” industries that employ more women. As a result, personal budgets are being squeezed tighter than before. This, coupled with the existing patchwork of coverage in our healthcare system, means that patients will continue to fall through the cracks.

From a budget standpoint, programs that offer free prescription contraception have consistently proven to be revenue positive. This is because the cost of providing free prescription contraception is considerably lower than the costs associated with unintended pregnancy. Options for Sexual Health estimated that every \$1 spent on contraceptive support can save as much as \$90 in public expenditure on social supports. Their [study](#) estimated that the BC government would save up to \$95 million annually if it implemented a program of universal access to prescription contraception - approximately twice what the program would cost to implement.

Lastly, and perhaps most obviously, access to prescription contraception is a gender equality issue. Reproductive options targeted towards men are easily accessible, low-cost, and often free. External condoms are available at every pharmacy and distributed for free in many community centres, health clinics, and schools. Vasectomy costs are covered by BC’s provincial health plan, although contraception for people with uteruses is much more expensive and complicated, too often putting it out of reach. Additionally, BC MSP recognizes the experience of reproductive wellness for those with penises by providing coverage with a doctor’s note for erectile irregularity medication, such as Viagra. Yet, does not grant individuals with uteruses equal recognition of reproductive wellness, even with a doctor’s note, by covering all prescription contraception for people with uteruses. Sex is the dividing line and it must be removed.

### **Will you stand with British Columbians and urge the province to keep its promise?**

AccessBC has been working to intensify public pressure around removing barriers to contraception in BC, and one essential component of our success has been mobilizing support from working with BC municipalities. Our team is reaching out to municipalities and asking them to write letters supporting universal no-cost prescription contraception, and municipal councils have been rising to the challenge.

To date, 30 municipalities and districts - and counting, have passed motions supporting universal access to no-cost prescription contraception and have written to the provincial government urging them to adopt this policy as soon as possible.

These municipalities have supported this policy because there is strong evidence that a program that makes all forms of prescription contraception available at no cost would be revenue positive. Such a policy would also improve a number of social and health indicators, increase equity, and promote a host of other benefits.

Universal no-cost prescription contraception coverage is a policy that has been endorsed by the Canadian Medical Association, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, and the Canadian Paediatric Society. In 2020, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services also recommended that the provincial government “provide free prescription contraception for all people in British Columbia” in its [2021 Budget Consultation Report](#).

All three major political parties supported free contraception in the last election, and it was an important item in the BC NDP’s platform. The policy was also in Health Minister Dix’s mandate letter, but unfortunately was not included in the 2022 budget. It is clear that more pressure is needed, and this is why we are asking municipalities across BC to adopt the following resolution (or something similar), and to write to the provincial government to ask them to make all prescription contraception in BC free:

### **The Motion: Universal No-Cost Coverage of Prescription Contraception**

WHEREAS cost is an absolute barrier to people accessing contraception, particularly for people with low incomes, youth, and people from equity-seeking communities;

WHEREAS providing no-cost prescription contraception improves health outcomes for parents and infants by reducing the risks associated with unintended pregnancy, and is likely to reduce direct medical costs on the provincial health system;

WHEREAS contraceptive methods targeted at males (such as condoms or vasectomies) are available at low cost or are covered by BC's Medical Services Plan, whereas contraceptive methods for people with uteruses (such as birth control pills, intrauterine devices, or hormone injections) have high up-front costs, making access to contraception inequitable;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council directs the Mayor to write to the Provincial Government to urge them to make all prescription contraception universally available at no cost under the BC Medical Services Plan.

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Please let us know if your municipality adopts this motion so we can sing your praises and help use this support to put additional pressure on the government. And do let us know if you require any assistance in drafting a letter to the province.

You can learn more about barriers to prescription contraception and the benefits of universal no-cost prescription contraception in our [Briefing Paper](#), and more about the AccessBC Campaign at [www.accessbc.org](http://www.accessbc.org).

Thank you for your support of this important issue.

On behalf of the AccessBC Campaign for free prescription contraception in BC,

Jessica L. Jimmo  
Municipal Outreach Coordinator



**AccessBC**

With gratitude, I respectfully acknowledge that I live and learn on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples—sq̓əc̓íyaʔ t̓əm̓əx̓w (Katzie), Qayqayt, Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō, Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwiltulh (Tseil-Waututh), and x̓w̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.