



27 November 2007

Dr. David Butler-Jones
Chief Public Health Officer
Public Health Agency of Canada
130 Colonnade Road, A.L. 6501H
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9 Canada

Via mail and posted on: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/contact_cpho_e.html

Dear Dr. Butler-Jones,

On behalf of the Special Libraries Association, I urge you not to close the Canadian Health Network (CHN), a leading source for health information on the Web in Canada. The Special Libraries Association is a global organization comprised of more than 900 active members in Canada, and over 11,000 members in seventy-five nations around the world.

CHN is an important and impressive bilingual web-portal, successfully helping Canadians find the information they are looking for on how to stay healthy and prevent disease. In fact, the CHN will become even more important with the recent announcement made in September that the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) plans to pursue a new open access policy for funded research. As a publicly funded organization, CIHR has a fundamental interest in ensuring that the findings that result from the research, including research publications and publication-related data, are available to the widest possible audience at the earliest possible opportunity.

The U.S. is also moving the same direction as CIHR, and the U.S. Senate voted in October to demand an Open Access mandate at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH). The U.S. House of Representatives adopted the same language in July, making this the first time ever that both Houses of Congress have demanded an Open Access mandate at the NIH.

Access to important well-vetted information portals such as CHN is essential to the public health, as is narrowing random resources in the huge world of information which are not gauged or interpreted. As more and more information is becoming freely available to people increasingly turning to online resources, the government most certainly has a role in ensuring its citizens have ways to find and understand reliable information.

If the CHN is closed, it is our belief that the public will be negatively affected by losing this key resource of timely, accurate data.

Respectfully,

Doug Newcomb, Chief Policy Officer
Dnewcomb@sla.org 1.703.647.4923