

Letter to the Editor, Globe and Mail in response to: "Canada is a land of mediocrity, Conference Board says", June 13

To score an A in health, Canada needs greater prevention and health promotion investments.

Kudos to the Conference Board for calling on Canada to invest more in health promotion and illness prevention to improve people's health. In 2004 the First Ministers meeting for the future of healthcare recognized that '*health promotion, disease and injury prevention are critical to achieving better health outcomes for Canadians.*' Yet this is still hot air. The Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion's budget is less than 2% of that of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and health promotion is generally -- and wrongly -- narrowly understood as promoting physical activity and healthier eating habits. Poverty, low-paid, stressful jobs, communities that lack recreation facilities and grocery stores, social isolation, inadequate child care, poor housing, racism -- these make it hard for people to be healthy. If Canada really wants to address health, we must treat poor eating as a social problem, not a personal choice!

Scoring an A in health requires an upstream, integrated approach. Now that would be true innovation! We look forward to the Conference Board's forthcoming report on health inequities and socioeconomic determinants of health, and Canada's taking action to fulfill its promise to World Health Organization commitments.