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February 9, 2017

The Honourable Navdeep Singh Bains, P.C.
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development
MP for Mississauga–Malton
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
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e-mail: Navdeep.Bains@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Bains,

We are writing on behalf of the BC Association of Social Workers' Seniors Community of Practice to urge you to reject the proposed bid for a majority ownership of Retirement Concepts by a foreign investor, Anbang Insurance.

Healthcare is a fundamental right for all Canadians. As you know, Retirement Concepts is the highest billing provider for Assisted Living and Residential Care Services in BC. Foreign ownership of these essential services could put them in jeopardy, as seen with one of the largest care home operators in the United Kingdom, Southern Cross. In this British case, a focus on finances with foreign for-profit ownership led to inadequate care and even death among seniors in these homes. Ultimately, it also led to the company's demise.

It is very distressing that such a huge takeover that has potentially significant effects on public health has had very little news coverage and opportunity for public scrutiny. We therefore request that the impacts on public health of this deal as well as the intentions of this real estate giant be thoroughly reviewed and shared with the public. The public has a right to know about this. This matter is of too much importance to make a hasty decision.

Providing healthcare and supportive housing services to some of our most vulnerable citizens in BC is not a question of profit or land development. It is about people and meeting their basic care needs in a respectful, dignified, compassionate and caring way. Anbang Insurance has no experience or expertise in providing nursing care. This company may not have the well-being and health of our seniors at the forefront of their minds. Their focus is on land acquisition. At the very least we believe that you owe it to our seniors and the public to thoroughly scrutinize the intentions of this company. While the CEO of Retirement Concepts says that the care will not change, how can we be sure? How do we know that profit will not dictate the future of these care homes?

Please consider the negative impacts that this sale could have on seniors care across Canada.

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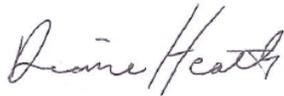
The focus could change to procuring land rather than improving care for the most vulnerable in our country. We know that the population of seniors is rising and according to Statistics Canada, is expected to reach about 23-25% of the population by 2036. We need to act now and ensure that we are on the right track to having sufficient services to meet the growing needs of seniors in our communities. We need owners who are in touch with, and care about seniors. We cannot risk selling our healthcare resources to a foreign for-profit company.

Health care for seniors is not for sale in Canada. Please Honorable Minister Bains, reject the proposed bid to sell a majority ownership of Retirement Concepts to Anbang Insurance. For the sake of those citizens who have contributed so much to our society and for your own sake as one who will be a senior someday, we ask you to please thoughtfully consider into whose control you are placing the health and care of our seniors.

Sincerely,



Michael Crawford, RSW
President, BC Association of Social Workers



Dianne Heath, RSW
Executive Director, BC Association of Social Workers

References:

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<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2010000/chap/pop/pop02-eng.htm>

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