

April 20, 2021

BACKGROUND

Better health and mental health care

The last year has highlighted the importance of strong health and mental health services. Budget 2021 continues to protect the health and safety of British Columbians and expands the services people rely on with \$4 billion in new investments over the fiscal plan to strengthen health and mental health care supports. This includes \$900 million in one-time funding in 2021-22 to continue to deliver COVID-19 related health services.

COVID-19 health supports to keep people safe

While more people are being vaccinated each day, government continues working hard to keep people safe. Budget 2021 allocates \$900 million in 2021-22 to support the Province's continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes funding for:

- The provincial vaccination program so that every British Columbian can receive their COVID-19 vaccine.
- Testing and contact tracing, expanded flu immunization, increased capacity at the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Rural and Remote Collaborative Framework to improve access to health services for rural, remote and Indigenous communities.
- Ongoing supports to ensure the safety of long-term care and assisted living facilities, including screening staff and providing additional personal protective equipment to help keep seniors safe.

Better health care for a healthy tomorrow

Budget 2021 continues to strengthen B.C.'s health care so people are better prepared for future health challenges. Budget 2021 includes an investment of \$2.6 billion over three years in funding for health care, which includes:

- \$585 million over the fiscal plan for the Health Career Access Program to train and hire up to 3,000 people to be health care support workers and assistance, including building capacity in long-term care facilities, and targets people who lost their jobs in other sectors as a result of the pandemic.
- \$495 million over the fiscal plan to continue to increase capacity in diagnostic imaging and surgery to accelerate the surgeries people need.
- \$300 million over three years to address growing demand for cancer care, PharmaCare and services under the Medical Services Plan.
- \$253 million over the fiscal plan to continue to expand team-based and urgent primary care centres that provide British Columbians with faster access to doctors and nurse practitioners.
- \$45 million over three years in new funding to help address systemic Indigenous racism in the health care system through training and education, and through prioritizing the hiring of a health care workforce that better represents B.C.'s diverse communities.

For many B.C. seniors, the last year has been especially isolating and difficult. The pandemic shone a light on the importance of a strong foundation of supports to keep seniors safe and healthy. Budget 2021 has targeted investments for seniors, including \$68 million over three years to deliver quality home care to help seniors with daily living by increasing the number of care aides and other community care providers in communities. Budget 2021 also invests \$12 million to provide people with moderate to highly complex needs the ability to manage their health with dignity by receiving care at home through the Home Health Monitoring Initiative.

The largest mental health investment in B.C. history

Through A Pathway to Hope, government began a long-term plan to transform B.C.'s mental health and substance use system. The dual health emergencies of COVID-19 and illicit drug toxicity have taken an immense toll. Budget 2021 invests \$500 million to continue to expand mental health and substance use services to better connect people to the culturally safe and effective care they need.

Mental health funding

- \$97 million to build a network of mental health supports for youth through increased mental health funding for schools, new Foundry centres that provide young people health and wellness resources in their community, and integrated child and youth supports teams for 15 more school districts.
- \$61 million in new funding over three years to improve access and quality of mental health services, including expanding eating disorder care and better access to suicide prevention services and early psychosis intervention.
- \$14 million for the First Nations Health Authority to deliver mental health and addictions services to Indigenous peoples.

Substance use and overdose emergency response

- \$330 million over the fiscal plan to provide a full spectrum of substance-use treatment and recovery services, including \$152 million for opioid treatment.
- 195 new substance use treatment and recovery beds in communities throughout the province to help more people get on a path to recovery.

Investing in new health infrastructure

Budget 2021 continues to focus on building critical health infrastructure through \$7.8 billion in capital investments over the fiscal plan period. The investments will support new major construction projects and upgrading of health facilities, medical and diagnostic equipment and technology systems. Health infrastructure projects include the New Surrey Hospital and Cancer Centre and the new St. Paul's Hospital, as well as new hospitals in the Cowichan District, Dawson Creek and District, Terrace and Stuart Lake. Investments also include new spaces for patients in the Burnaby Hospital, Kamloops' Royal Inland Hospital, Penticton Regional Hospital and Cariboo Memorial Hospital.

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