

February, 22, 2022

BACKGROUND 1

Building a stronger society by putting people first

The investments made to date in services like health care, child care and housing have supported people through the pandemic and recent climate-related disasters. Budget 2022 builds on this strength by continuing to invest in the quality, accessibility and responsiveness of the services people rely on.

Affordable, accessible, quality child care

Since launching the ChildCareBC plan in Budget 2018, government has invested over \$2.4 billion to build an affordable, accessible, high-quality child care system to ensure that families – especially women, can participate in the workforce. After signing a historic agreement with the federal government in 2021 to accelerate the development of this system, Budget 2022 makes further investments for:

- More spaces:
 - Since the launch of the 10-Year ChildCareBC Plan in 2018, government has funded more than 26,000 new licensed child care spaces – the fastest space creation in B.C.'s history.
 - Through the new shared agreement with the federal government, delivering 30,000 new spaces for children under the age of six within five years, and 40,000 within seven years.
 - Creating more before- and after-school spaces, including nearly doubling the Seamless Day program from 24 to 44 school districts, and expanding the Just B4 program to 14 more school districts.
- Lower fees:
 - Budget 2022 brings B.C. closer than ever to government's planned \$10-a-day child care.
 - Through a new agreement with the federal government, fees for full-day infant and toddler care will be reduced by 50% to an average of approximately \$20 a day by the end of 2022.
 - Budget 2022 builds on that investment by cutting average fees for preschool and before- and after-school care to less than \$20 a day for the 2023-24 school year.

- Quality care:
 - Expanding the wage enhancement program to early childhood educators (ECEs) who spend less than 50% of their time in direct child care functions but are still working within child care services.
 - Adding new licensing officers to accelerate the process of certifying child care facilities.
 - Expanding the dual credit program to 150 more students and creating 130 more ECE training seats annually in post-secondary institutions.
- Indigenous child care:
 - Supporting the Aboriginal Head Start program, which provides culturally-based inclusive child care, early learning and family bonding opportunities for Indigenous children.
 - Investing in consultation, planning and capacity building for Indigenous rights holders.

Strengthening health and mental health services

Improving the quality of physical and mental health-care services and keeping British Columbians safe from the COVID-19 pandemic remains the Province's highest priority. Budget 2022 invests \$3.2 billion in additional funding over the fiscal plan to improve the health-care services people rely on, including by:

- Advancing the Primary Care Strategy by adding new urgent and primary care centres and working in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority to continue creating up to 15 First Nations Primary Care Centres throughout the province.
- Continuing a strategy to reduce wait lists for surgeries and diagnostic imaging with \$303 million in new base budget funding over the next three years.
- Reducing emergency call wait and response times by adding more paramedics and dispatchers, with \$148 million over the fiscal plan for the BC Emergency Health Services Action Plan.
- Improving wages, working conditions, job security and stability for thousands of support service workers, the majority of whom are racialized women, while improving outcomes for patients by bringing these workers back to the public sector after 20 years of contracting this work through private companies.
- Continuing to support actions of the Pathway to Hope plan to expand mental health and addictions care, supported with significant Budget 2021 investments that bring increased annual expenditures since 2017 to over \$375 million annually.

Budget 2022 also invests an additional \$875 million for 2022-23 from Pandemic Recovery Contingencies, for:

- Ongoing COVID-19 and influenza vaccination programs.
- PPE for health-care workers.
- Enhanced measures to limit the risk of COVID-19 for vulnerable residents in long-term care and assisted living facilities.
- Increased mental health supports for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- Funding for the B.C. Centre for Disease Control.

Responding to and preventing homelessness

People will benefit from a new, cross-government approach to both prevent homelessness and respond quickly to assist people experiencing homelessness to become stably housed. Budget 2022 invests \$633 million over the fiscal plan to expand services and shift the approach to homelessness in the province from reactive to proactive, by:

- Providing \$35 million over the next three years to respond to the heightened risk of homelessness faced by former youth in care, through improved supports for these youth beyond their 19th birthday:
 - Beginning in 2022-23, temporary housing and support arrangements that had been provided in 2020 will be made permanent, and new \$600-a-month rent supplements will be introduced for program participants.
 - Over the course of 2023-24 and 2024-25, the Agreement with Young Adults program will be expanded to include counselling, medical benefits and more life-skills programming. Income supports will also be improved, including an earnings exemption so youth don't have to decide between working and receiving benefits.
- Introducing \$600-a-month rent supplements for more than 3,000 people over the next three years to help them become stably housed, with integrated wraparound supports.
- Doubling the current number of community integration specialists to help people experiencing homelessness navigate government programs and available supports in communities throughout the province.
- Expanding the first-of-its-kind Complex Care housing model to at least 20 more sites across B.C. through an investment of \$164 million over three years, with plans to support up to 500 people with severe mental health, substance-use issues, or traumatic and acquired brain injuries who are currently homeless or unstably housed.
- Ensuring housing support continues for the up to 3,000 people who were temporarily housed in leased or purchased hotel and other spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic, as more transition to permanent housing, with an investment of \$264 million over three years. This includes funding to acquire and operate permanent housing for a portion of those now temporarily housed, as well as \$150 million in Pandemic and Recovery Contingencies to extend some temporary spaces where needed while permanent housing options become available.

Beginning the transition to improved services for families with support needs

Budget 2022 starts the transition to more accessible and inclusive services for children and youth with support needs with an investment of \$172 million over three years. This includes establishing family connections centres throughout the province. Of this amount, Budget 2022 invests \$114 million to begin the transition to a needs-based system, with early implementation to begin in two regions. Findings from these pilots will inform the development and implementation of the provincewide system to be in place by 2025.

This funding envelope also responds to the increasing number of children and youth accessing support, with an increase of \$58 million over the fiscal plan period.

Support for sexual assault survivors

Budget 2022 invests to support survivors of sexual assault by providing core funding to approximately 50 community-based sexual assault response organizations, undoing cuts that were made to these services in 2002. These organizations will receive dedicated, ongoing funding to provide critical crisis response, counselling, preventative medication, forensic exams, mechanisms to report to the police, and child protection services.

Safe, welcoming K-12 schools

Budget 2022 responds to growing K-12 enrolment with more than \$664 million in additional funding over the fiscal plan, bringing the total annual funding for K-12 education to over \$7.3 billion by 2024-25. This investment will:

- Increase funding for enrolment growth in school districts, continuing to provide allocations for children and youth in care, Indigenous learners, rural school districts, and students with support needs.
- Continue to support nearly 4,500 teachers, including more than 700 special education teachers and more than 200 teacher psychologists and counsellors through the Classroom Enhancement Fund.

Budget 2022 also includes over \$3.1 billion in capital funding over the next three years to build, maintain and seismically upgrade schools throughout the province.

Improved accessibility

Budget 2022 provides \$3 million in new funding over three years to continue the implementation of the Accessible British Columbia Act and develop an accessibility plan for persons with disabilities, develop regulations to increase accessibility and establish a provincial accessibility committee.

Inclusion and anti-racism

The government is working in partnership with communities around the province to draft anti-racism data legislation to be introduced in Spring 2022. This legislation will help government to provide better and more equitable services by enabling the consistent collection, use and disclosure of demographic data, and help identify gaps in services to Indigenous and racialized communities.

Government is also working to draft B.C.'s first anti-racism act in consultation with Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities to make B.C. a safer, more inclusive and equitable province for everyone, regardless of race, skin colour or faith.

This builds on efforts underway in the province to combat racism including modernizing the Police Act, developing a K-12 anti-racism action plan and tackling anti-Indigenous racism in health care. Funding continues to support a provincewide anti-racism awareness campaign, a provincial anti-racism network, Resilience BC, as well as more than 190 community organizations that are working to address racism and diversity in B.C.

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