

February 28, 2023

BACKGROUND

Keeping B.C.'s communities safe and healthy

The challenges of the past several years have reinforced the importance of staying safe and healthy, no matter where you live in B.C. Budget 2023 makes strategic investments to ensure people can continue to access the services and care they need, when they need it, and can feel safe and secure in their communities.

Boosting B.C.'s health-care system

It's important that government investments reflect the value that thousands of doctors, nurses, technicians, health-care workers and support staff bring to B.C. communities every day.

Budget 2023 takes the next steps to strengthen British Columbia's health- and mental-health-care system with \$6.4 billion in new investments over three years.

- As people grow older and more people move to B.C., Budget 2023 commits \$2.6 billion to help with growing demand and increasing costs. As part of that investment, \$270 million will go toward the BC Cancer Care Plan to expand and enhance cancer care services in communities throughout the province, in addition to the \$150 million going to the BC Cancer Foundation through supplementary estimates.
- B.C.'s health workforce strategy, originally launched in September 2022, will be bolstered by \$995 million over three years to help recruit and retain staff, redesign and rebalance workloads, embed reconciliation and cultural safety, and expand training and education seats for a full range of health-care professionals.
- B.C.'s new payment model for family doctors puts physicians and their patients front and centre. Budget 2023 provides more than \$1 billion to help implement the new model and ensure that doctors are better recognized for the primary care they provide and their essential role as a gateway to the broader health-care system.
- To support the ongoing management and health response to COVID-19, Budget 2023 provides \$875 million to continue B.C.'s COVID-19 response.

Within the health-care system, it's essential that people who struggle with mental-health, addiction or substance use can find and stay connected to the care they need. As part of the \$6.4-billion investment, Budget 2023 sets out more than \$1 billion in new funding over the fiscal plan, which includes \$867 million in operating and \$169 million in capital investments.

- For people struggling with substance-use disorder, more than \$586 million will add treatment and recovery beds throughout B.C., develop and roll out a new model of seamless care to support people through their entire recovery journey, create wraparound supports, expand Indigenous treatment centres, and develop new recovery communities to support people and their recovery through the long term.
- The Province will expand on the Red Fish Healing Centre model of care to other regions of the province, so that more people can receive care for complex mental-health and substance-use issues closer to home.
- Budget 2023 accelerates the Province's response to the illicit drug toxicity crisis across the full continuum of care with an additional \$184 million to support:
 - enhanced prevention and early intervention services for child, youth and young adults;
 - safe prescription alternatives to the toxic drug supply to save lives;
 - expanding two mobile response programs: Car Programs, which bring together police and health workers, and Peer Assisted Care Teams (PACTs), which are led by civilians; and
 - planning to create culturally safe PACTs led by Indigenous people.
- Through B.C.'s new housing investments and the refreshed housing plan, Budget 2023 dedicates \$169 million over three years in capital funding to help create additional complex-care beds to support people with complex mental-health and substance-use issues, including those who are homeless or whose needs are not met by existing supportive housing. As part of health-care investments, Budget 2023 provides \$97 million in operating funding to provide people staying at complex-care facilities with health-focused supports and services.

To ensure health-care centres and hospitals can continue to provide the best care possible for British Columbians, Budget 2023 dedicates \$11.2 billion over three years as part of the largest-ever capital investment for new health-care infrastructure. Major projects that have been approved include:

- the new St. Paul's Hospital, with capacity for 548 in-patient beds when open in 2027, and projected budget of approximately \$2.2 billion;
- the new Surrey Hospital and cancer care centre to help meet the needs of a growing and aging population in 2027, with a projected budget of more than \$1.7 billion;
- the Cowichan and District Hospital Replacement Project to open in 2027 with a budget of more than \$1.4 billion;
- phases 2 and 3 of the Royal Columbian Hospital redevelopment and expansion of the acute care tower, emergency department and operating rooms, with the acute care tower opening in 2025 with budget of approximately \$1.2 billion;
- the redevelopment of Richmond Hospital to replace the acute care tower and expand capacity for 2031 with a projected budget of more than \$860 million;

- the replacement of the Mills Memorial Hospital in Terrace will add inpatient beds and expand a regional mental-health rehabilitation and recovery program for 2026 with a projected budget of \$633 million;
- the replacement of the Dawson Creek and District Hospital will include more inpatient beds and an expansion of the emergency department, surgical and operating space, and ambulatory care services for 2027 with a projected budget of \$378 million.

Building safe and healthy communities and improving access to justice

Budget 2023 funds new and expanded enforcement and intervention services to keep people and communities safe. Safe and healthy communities are supported by new health and mental-health investments, including treatment services, safe supply, complex-care housing and new integrated community response teams.

Across the fiscal plan, Budget 2023 sets out \$462 million to help build safe communities, improve access to justice and to create connected, cohesive support for people with mental-health and addictions challenges. Many of the initiatives funded through Budget 2023 were announced as part of B.C.'s Safer Communities Action Plan in November 2022.

- For communities served by provincial police services, a \$230-million boost will help hire another 256 RCMP officers to enhance enforcement and crime prevention capacity, particularly for rural, remote and Indigenous communities. This will help provide supports for police to focus on violent crimes and other pressing public safety issues.
- Approximately \$87 million in new funding is supporting the launch of two new enforcement programs: the new Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative, and the new Special Investigation & Targeted Enforcement (SITE) program to help reduce repeat offending, improve criminal justice response and speed up information-sharing among justice partners.
- To continue to modernize policing in B.C., Budget 2023 sets out \$25 million for consultation and public engagement to inform new policing and police oversight legislation.
- Approximately \$21 million will support cannabis licensing operations, including the cannabis licensing system, streamlining service delivery, and strengthening compliance and enforcement.

In January 2023, British Columbia became the first province to decriminalize simple possession of small amounts of illicit drugs for personal use. To move forward on decriminalization, Budget 2023 provides \$19 million over three years to help reduce stigma and evaluate the implementation.

Knowing that B.C.'s legal system will support and serve everyone in the community is an important part of creating a safe, secure province. Complementing B.C.'s investments to build safer communities with services that support and represent the diverse makeup of the province, an additional \$80 million over three years will be dedicated to improving access to justice.

- In partnership with the BC First Nations Justice Council, 10 new Indigenous Justice Centres will open over the next two years to provide free and culturally safe places that provide legal help, early resolution programs, support and representation for Indigenous Peoples. Supported by \$44 million over the plan, the network of Indigenous Justice Centres will expand to 15 locations and one virtual centre, supporting the important work of addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system.

- With an additional \$13.5 million over three years, the BC Human Rights Tribunal will see a significant boost to core funding to improve processes at the tribunal and the Community Legal Assistance Society will help more disadvantaged people access free legal services.
- Approximately \$16 million over the fiscal plan will help with virtual and after-hours bail hearings to expedite court hearings. Virtual bail allows accused people to attend bail hearings in their home communities instead travelling to a bigger city where they are disconnected from family and community supports.
- Additional investments in justice include a base-budget boost of \$2 million per year for the Independent Investigations Office, which investigates incidents of death or serious harm that may have involved a police officer.

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