

February 19, 2019

Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC

2019 Budget Focuses on Savings for Individuals and Families

VICTORIA – The budget presented today by the B.C. government is strongly focused on reducing costs for B.C. families, a move which will be welcomed individually by nurses across the province who share concerns around housing, debt, childcare and education. Unfortunately, it falls short on introducing specific and new health care spending.

“As nurses, we are always relieved to see opportunities for British Columbians to improve their socio-economic status, which in turn improves the health and well-being of individuals and communities,” said Jacquolynne Keath, Chair of *Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC (NNPBC)*. “While we remain hopeful that the Primary Care Networks currently under development will reduce the number of British Columbians struggling to find a family doctor and increase access to health care teams that include nurse practitioners and nurses, we recognize that this is only one solution for transforming health care, and we would have valued a budget that includes comprehensive system changes.”

NNPBC is pleased with several new announcements in this budget (recognizing that many of today’s announcements and initiatives have been previously announced). Some of the new initiatives that will support nurses individually and improve the determinants of health as a whole include:

- The new BC Child Opportunity Benefit which increases the amount per child a family receives per year and extends the benefit until the child turns eighteen (as opposed to ending at age six).
- A new revenue-sharing agreement reached after decades of work and advocacy by the First Nations Leadership Council, in the amount of \$3 billion over 25 years, which will enable every Indigenous community in B.C. to be eligible for between \$250,000 and \$2 million annually.
- An additional \$50 per month for individuals who rely on disability and income assistance.
- \$105 million over three years to support cancer care services delivered by the BC Cancer Agency.
- A \$75 million investment to improve access to mental health care for children and youth by making it easier for families to find and access high-quality and integrated mental health services.
- Elimination of interest from all British Columbia student loans.

“While some of these initiatives are long overdue and will be welcomed by nurses and families, nurses across British Columbia who work in the health system every day can describe the scale of change and redirection that is needed to support a strong and sustainable health care system. The vagueness of this budget will leave many questioning when and how that change will occur,” said Keath.

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