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## 2023 BC Budget Boosts Health Care and Mental Health Services Spending

VICTORIA – The just released 2023-24 BC Budget focuses increased spending on health, mental health and addictions plus housing and infrastructure with additional supports to offset the heavy cost of inflation.

A few highlights of the 2023 budget include:

- \$6.4 billion over three years to health care services with renewed emphasis on recruiting and retaining health care workers including those who are internationally educated.
- The addition of bursaries and grants to support those looking to enter the health care workforce.
- An increase in the number of Urgent and Primary Care Centres.
- \$1 billion for mental health funding which includes \$586 million for treatment and recovery beds, including expanded Indigenous treatment centres.
- Close to \$1.7 billion investment in housing supports, with spending to increase supportive housing, complex-care units, and complex-care services.
- Income and disability shelter rate increases.
- Access to free prescription contraception starting April 1, 2023.

“NNPBC is happy to see increased investment and support for our health care system. The focus on health and mental health services and the recruitment and retention of health care workers is a good start to addressing BC’s health care challenges. There is work to be done however to ensure that nurses are supported to deliver the best care possible by improving nurse to patient staffing ratios, increasing the number of seats in nursing schools, and improving mental health and burnout to name only a few. Moreover, while the investment into mental health is welcome, ongoing focus must be made in working towards a safe supply of illicit drugs,” said Sherri Kensall, NNPBC Board Chair.

British Columbians deserve a health care system in which all health care professionals work together to strengthen and advance health care. Greater investment into health is an opportunity to begin to address the current crisis.

Alix Arndt, NNPBC Acting CEO notes; “BC’s roughly 60,000 nurses stand at the ready to provide input into the ways in which government’s goals can be enacted throughout the system. We urge all levels of government to invest in nursing to move health care improvements forward and develop action plans that will lead us toward meaningful health system modernization.”

NNPBC looks forward to ongoing partnership and collaboration with the BC Ministry of Health and the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions to ensure that nursing led solutions focus heavily on future initiatives and plans.

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