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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **Improved mental-health, anti-racism supports coming for nurses**

VICTORIA – Nurses across B.C. will soon benefit from expanded mental-health services and anti-racism supports to help strengthen the workforce and enable culturally safe patient care.

“Nurses and nurse practitioners play an integral role in the delivery of health care,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “We have heard from them, but more than that, we are listening to what they need to thrive in their chosen profession. Through this investment, nurses across the province will have access to improved mental-health and cultural-humility supports – an important step in delivering on our promises of strengthening retention of staff and supporting Indigenous cultural safety throughout the B.C. health-care system.”

The Ministry of Health has provided Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia (NNPBC) one-time funding of \$500,000 to expand virtual mental-health services offered through Advica Health. Advica Health is a Canadian-based health navigation company that provides comprehensive virtual health-care services through nurse navigators, registered mental health providers and medical specialists.

Nurses will have access to a 24 hours a day, seven days a week secure and confidential hotline connected to registered mental-health clinicians who will provide timely crisis-support and next-step options. Other services will include self-guided support options, skill-based exercises and other programs to help manage mental health.

“Nurses have faced unprecedented challenges over the past few years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the toxic drug crisis,” said Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “With this funding, when nurses make the courageous decision to reach out for help, services will be there to meet them. It’s vital that we take care of nurses, so they can continue to do the important work of helping British Columbians across the province.”

An additional one-time grant of \$275,000 will enhance NNPBC’s capacity to support nurses in the delivery of culturally safe care, to meet their responsibilities under the Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility and Anti-racism Practice Standard, and formalize long-term Indigenous nursing leadership infrastructure to ensure Indigenous nursing voices are heard, especially for health policy, advocacy and system design.

NNPBC will partner with the Ministry of Health’s Indigenous Health and Reconciliation branch to:

- reaffirm the relationships between Indigenous nurses and NNPBC and follow through on NNPBC’s commitment to be led by the voices of Indigenous nurses in setting direction for anti-racism work;
- partner and collaborate to develop services that support non-Indigenous nurses in

meeting their responsibilities under the Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility, and Anti-racism Practice Standard; and

- collaborate with Indigenous nursing leaders to create valued spaces for Indigenous nursing leadership to meaningfully advance change in British Columbia.

“We look forward to working alongside our Indigenous nurse leaders to help deliver on our commitment to reconciliation and the creation of a health-care system that is culturally safe for Indigenous people and all people in B.C.,” Dix said.

These supports build on recent investments to better support nurses, including better wages and supports for nurses, such as a new nurse-to-patient staffing model through the recently ratified nursing collective agreement. Other key investments have included improved pathways and bursaries for internationally educated nurses to join the workforce and more than 600 new seats for nursing students in post-secondary institutions across the province.

“NNPBC continues our important work of supporting nurses in British Columbia and we welcome the opportunity to partner with the ministries to support nurses’ mental health as well as nurses’ anti-racism and cultural-humility practices,” said Sherri Kensall, board chair, NNPBC. “We applaud the investment in Indigenous nursing leadership and recognize that Indigenous nurses continue to lead the way across our province and beyond. Investing in nursing and nursing led solutions is critical in addressing health system challenges. This investment demonstrates a commitment to nursing and ensuring that British Columbians have access to the safe, competent care that is unique to nursing.”

These investments align with B.C.’s Health Human Resources Strategy. This strategy, announced in fall 2022, ensures people get the health services they need and are cared for by a healthy workforce. The strategy focuses on 70 actions to recruit, train and retain health-care workers, while redesigning the health-care system to foster workplace satisfaction and innovation.

#### **Quote:**

#### **Harry Bains, Minister of Labour –**

"Nurses across the province provide vital front-line services that people of all ages depend on, but their work can be stressful and demanding. The Ministry of Health is standing by our nurses by providing easy access to important services that support their mental health."

#### **Learn More:**

To learn about B.C.’s Health Human Resources Strategy, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BCHealthHumanResourcesStrategy-Sept2022.pdf>

To learn about Advica Health, visit: <https://advicahealth.com/>

To learn about government’s commitment to reconciliation and addressing Indigenous-specific racism, visit: [https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news\\_releases\\_2020-2024/2022HLTH0226-001827.htm](https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_2020-2024/2022HLTH0226-001827.htm)

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