



### **Nursing Applauds Budget that Support Patients and Families**

VICTORIA--Today's provincial budget will have a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and communities throughout British Columbia, a direction which is welcomed by the 40,000 registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) represented by the Association of Registered Nurses of BC (ARNBC).

Notably, government announced a much-needed decrease in MSP premiums, effective January 1, 2018. By cutting MSP premiums in half, with the intention of eliminating them entirely over the next few years, the province will align with much of the rest of Canada in ensuring access to health care is equitable for everyone. This is a core principle of the Canadian health care system, and something that the nursing profession has advocated for extensively over many years.

"We know that every penny counts for families that are struggling to provide housing, nutritious meals and other social determinants of health," said Zak Matieschyn, ARNBC President. "Nurses see the negative impacts on health when these needs are not met, and we are pleased to see this decrease in MSP premiums which reflects the values of universal health care and will positively impact the budget of many B.C. households."

While this budget was modest on new spending when compared to many election year budgets, ARNBC is pleased to note several additional initiatives that will have a direct impact on individuals and families, such as:

- \$165 million for youth mental health needs and to address substance use issues including more mental health counselling and treatment for children and new highly specialized addiction treatment beds for youth;
- \$40 million to support 100% high-speed internet connectivity for all British Columbians before 2021;
- \$120 million for family supports and reunification, culturally appropriate services, and additional staff within Indigenous communities to address recommendations of the Report on Indigenous Child Welfare;
- \$45 million over three years to eliminate fees and ensure no one has to pay for school busing;
- Lowering the interest rate on student loans from prime-plus-2.5% to just prime (August 1, 2017).

"In general, we are comfortable with the direction set by this budget which stays the course for the province and the health care system," said Matieschyn. "However, there are other areas where ARNBC will continue to advocate for future investments – for example, while this budget allocates an additional \$50 per month for assistance rates for persons with disabilities, we know we lag behind other jurisdictions in supporting this vulnerable population."

ARNBC values the direction laid out by the Ministry of Health and validated by the 2017/18 Ministry of Health Service Plan, which focuses on strengthening primary health care throughout B.C. ARNBC will continue to advocate for a stronger focus on utilizing the wealth of expertise and contributions of the nursing profession in delivering this plan, and looks forward to engaging with government and nurses as we continue to transform health care in British Columbia.

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Media Contact:  
Andrea Burton  
**604.730.7402**

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