



NURSES SUPPORT INCREASED FUNDING FOR SOCIAL POLICY INITIATIVES

VICTORIA – Today’s provincial budget update provides important insight into how government intends to move forward with some of the key reforms promised to British Columbians by the new NDP government. ARNBC applauds the funding direction that will address some of the nursing profession’s key concerns such as the ongoing opioid crisis, poverty and the social determinants of health.

Most notably, ARNBC looks forward to hearing how the \$290 million in funding for tackling the opioid crisis and establishing the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions will be allocated and distributed. Over the past several months, ARNBC and its members have been heavily engaged in supporting health professionals and people who use drugs, and we hope this funding will be used consultatively and effectively to help all British Columbians impacted by this crisis.

“We have spent considerable time and effort supporting front-line nurses throughout the current opioid crisis and ensuring the nursing voice is heard clearly at every level of policy and decision-making,” said Tania Dick, ARNBC President. “While we will continue to participate in long-term planning, we will not stop advocating for more short-term solutions that will save lives today and tomorrow. It is our hope that some of the funding announced today will be used to implement innovative and immediate actions – and that nursing will be invited to play a significant role in guiding this work.”

Today’s budget integrates changes that will improve the social determinants of health by making inroads into some of the key issues that are preventing British Columbians from enjoying good health and well-being. For example:

- Construction of 1,700 new units of affordable rental housing in communities across the province as well as funding for 2,000 modular supportive housing units for people who are homeless.
- An increase of \$100/month for individuals on income assistance and disability assistance, beginning in September 2017.
- Funding to develop a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- Establishing a fair wages commission to move towards a \$15/hour minimum wage for British Columbians.
- Education funding that will include hiring 3,500 teachers and ensuring smaller classes, resources and supports for children.
- Development of more than 4,000 new child care spaces.

“These types of investments, although not specific to health care, are absolutely critical to the improved health and well-being of the population,” said Dick. “Health is heavily influenced by whether individuals have jobs, access to good nutrition, strong education and homes – and we are encouraged by the direction this government is taking in incorporating the social determinants of health into every aspect of their budgeting process.”

Today’s budget provides a sense of how the new NDP government will organize and move forward on an ambitious plan to improve the lives of British Columbians. ARNBC recognizes that this budget builds on the one delivered by the previous government in February 2017, and the Association looks forward to a more fulsome budget in February 2018 which we hope will include targeted funding for Indigenous issues, increased primary health care services for all British Columbians and a stronger commitment strengthening B.C.’s mental health infrastructure. ARNBC will continue to advocate for a stronger focus on utilizing the wealth of expertise and contributions of the nursing profession in delivering on this budget, and looks forward to engaging with government and nurses as we continue to transform health care in British Columbia.

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