

BULLETIN

BC budget continues investments in health care and affordability measures

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For Immediate Release

Health Sciences Association of BC says today's provincial budget makes important investments in health care and affordability measures, but professional shortages in the health care system require action.

HSA represents more than 18,000 highly trained professionals working in medical imaging and lab testing, physiotherapy, social work, respiratory therapy, pharmacy, early childhood development, and many other health science and social service professions.

"We are pleased to see that Budget 2020 continues investments in public health care and social services," said HSA President Val Avery. "We welcome new operational and capital funding for health services. However, we know that professional shortages in the health care system and child development sector require ongoing action by government."

Health spending will increase from about \$23 billion in 2019/20 to \$24.3 billion in 2020/21—a rate of 5.6%.

The majority of Ministry of Health-designated "priority professions" that have labour market challenges - including recruitment and retention - are health science disciplines, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, lab and imaging technologists, among others. HSABC continues to advocate for solutions to tackle the shortage of health science professionals in public-sector and non-profit organizations.

"We will continue working with the provincial government to identify immediate and long-term solutions that address public-sector shortages of health science professionals, such as expanding post-secondary training opportunities and improving working conditions," Avery added.

Reduced ICBC rates, the new needs-based BC Access Grant for post-secondary students seeking a career in high-demand occupations, and investments in affordable housing and child care will make life more affordable for British Columbians. HSABC welcomes efforts to reduce income inequality through the creation of a new personal income tax bracket for top income earners making more than \$220,000. Income inequality causes poor health outcomes and increases the burden on social services and the health care system.

HSABC continues to recommend funding to expand team-based primary care through Community Health Centres, increased staffing of therapists at Child Development Centres to address long waits for children with disabilities, and an increase in income assistance rates as part of the province's poverty reduction plan.

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