



NEWS RELEASE

Provincial budget fails to address health care wait times

February 21, 2017

Immediate Release

Health Sciences Association of BC says today's provincial budget fails to help the thousands of British Columbians affected by long health care wait times.

HSA represents 17,000 highly trained specialists working in diagnostic MRI, sonography and lab testing, physiotherapy, social work, radiation therapy, pharmacy and many other health science professions.

"New buildings and machines don't actually treat patients," said HSA President Val Avery. "Health professionals treat patients, and there is a dire shortage of them because their pay has not been competitive for many years. Until the government deals with that, health professionals will be hard to recruit and retain, and wait times will continue to increase."

Last fall over 18,000 British Columbians were reported to be waiting for sonography testing on Vancouver Island alone. The waits are driven by a shortage of sonographers, which in turn is driven by the low wages paid in BC.

The wait list problem is not limited to sonography. HSA recently conducted a survey of over 1300 health science professionals and found that 53% of them said their department currently has a wait list, and 81% of those say the wait lists have grown longer.

The same survey revealed that 58% said their department currently has openings to hire additional health science professionals that are going unfilled.

"Until the government considers increasing wages to attract more sonographers and other health science professionals, this problem isn't going away," Avery said.

- 30 -