

Media Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 28, 2023

BC Budget 2023

Major investments in front-line health services, but few details on promised reforms to seniors' care

The 2023 provincial budget improves access to health care while tackling worker shortages and other factors that are contributing to worker burnout and injuries, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

But the budget tabled Tuesday contain few details on the BC NDP government's election commitment to reform seniors' care by tackling the fragmentation of service delivery and labour standards that took place under the previous BC Liberal government.

HEU's secretary-business manager Meena Brisard says the \$6.4 billion in additional health care spending in today's three-year budget plan will support initiatives designed to ease workloads and improve safety in health care settings.

"This budget supports the expansion of health workforce training, an additional 9.25 million hours in additional staffing under our main provincial collective agreement and significant wage increases for health care workers," says Brisard.

"With our own polling showing that a third of our members are considering quitting in the next two years, these initiatives are critical to addressing workload and burnout."

Overall, health authorities see a \$3.1 billion boost to their budgets by 25/26 for volume and service growth, and the funding of health care collective agreement settlements.

Budget 2023 also includes significant new investments in cancer care and mental health and addictions services.

But there are few details on how the government will implement its plans to build more public and non-profit care homes or strengthen oversight of for-profit care home operators for the funding they receive to provide care.

And while the budget continues the pandemic practice of levelling up wages for workers employed by low wage operators in long-term care and assisted living, there's no details on how government will implement their promise to standardize wages, benefits and working conditions across the sector on a permanent basis.

"The pandemic underscored how fragile and fragmented seniors' care has become after 20 years of privatization and underfunding by the former BC Liberal government," says Brisard. "It's a system that still needs to be fixed."

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