

# The picture of health

## How we are modernizing British Columbia's health care system



To protect and improve care for patients, and make our public health system sustainable, the Government of British Columbia is embarking on an ambitious and wide-ranging plan of health system renewal. This plan reflects the B.C. Government's commitment to:

- Accessible, high quality health care
- Patient-centred public health care
- Improved health and wellness
- Sustainable, affordable health care

The government is working to fulfill our goal of a sustainable, publicly funded health system that will meet the needs of British Columbians today and into the future.

By acting now, we can protect the strengths of our health care system while improving its ability to meet the changing needs of an increasingly diverse B.C. population. It will take innovation, resolve and creativity to make the improvements we need for a healthy future.

We must be committed and determined to develop new solutions in keeping with the principles of the *Canada Health Act*.

British Columbia's bold new vision and plan for health care will meet the challenges, overcome the pressures and ensure a high quality health care system today and when we need it in the future.

# Restoring health to the system

British Columbia's health care system has long been one of the best in the world, but this success is at risk. Since the system was put in place 40 years ago, changing health care needs, rising costs, and increasing demands have created severe stresses.

Provincial health spending has grown by \$1.1 billion in the past year alone, to \$10.4 billion, yet the pressures continue to grow. Change is essential to modernize public health care and to guarantee a high quality, patient-centred health care system for future generations.

## Accessible, high quality health care

All of us want a health care system that improves services for patients and ensures the right care is available at the right place, when people need it.

The B.C. Government's actions:



- Established strong, province-wide standards for health care, to ensure every patient has timely access to the services they need, regardless of where they live.
- Implemented performance contracts with all regional health authorities, to clearly define goals and requirements for improvement.
- Increased funding to the B.C. Ambulance Service by \$30 million so it can better respond to health care emergencies.
- Improving services for seniors by building 5,000 new intermediate and long-term care beds by 2006, while also developing new independent living options.
- Supporting patients who are terminally ill through a new palliative care benefits program that provides medication, medical supplies and equipment.
- Investing in new technology, including a new B.C. Telehealth Program to improve rural and remote care through video conferencing with regional referral centres and electronic data transfer.
- Implementing a \$125-million mental health plan to better meet the needs of people with mental illness, and providing an additional \$138 million for new facilities.

## Patient-centred public health care

British Columbians' health care needs have changed, but our health system hasn't kept pace.

We need to put patients at the top of our health care agenda and ensure that our public services are planned, structured and managed in a way that meets your needs.

The B.C. Government's actions:

- Established a new provincial authority to provide highly specialized services like cancer treatment through large regional centres.
- Working with other provinces to establish "sites of excellence" that will allow us to share human resources and services for specialized operations.
- Providing a strong focus on the particular health care challenges faced by aboriginal people, women and seniors.

## Improved health and wellness

While British Columbians are among the healthiest people in the world, not everyone shares in this success. Many of us are at risk from poor dietary habits, obesity, inactivity, accidents and tobacco use. We need to shift more focus to preventive programs.

The B.C. Government's actions:

- Developing early detection, patient education and support programs and coordinated care for nine major chronic diseases, including diabetes, congestive heart failure, asthma, depression and high blood pressure.
- Targeting key prevention measures such as reduced smoking, increased physical activity and better dietary choices.
- Working with regional health authorities to help reduce injuries.



## More nurses and doctors to care for you

Our doctors, nurses and other health professionals are the most important health resource we have. Yet many communities are experiencing severe shortages. British Columbia is implementing a new human resources strategy to attract and retain the skilled professionals we all depend on.

The B.C. Government's actions:

- Strengthening specialist physician services in regional centres to help avoid burnout.
- Establishing a new \$134-million provincial medical school with three campuses across B.C. to almost double the number of medical school spaces from 128 to 224 by 2005.
- Improving doctors' compensation through a 20 per cent increase in funding for fees and other services.
- Creating new ways of paying doctors.
- Adding 1,400 spaces for nurses and residential care aides over three years.
- Helping former nurses return to the job.
- Encouraging nurses to stay active in the profession.

## Sustainable, affordable health care

Health care costs now consume 40 per cent of B.C.'s provincial budget and are growing much faster than our provincial economy. British Columbians pay \$28.5 million every day to support our health system. New measures are needed to control costs, provide the improvements that are required and ensure services are sustainable for the future.

### The B.C. Government's actions:

- Restructured B.C.'s health authorities, from 52 to six, to provide efficiency and reduce administrative costs so those dollars go to patients.
- Provided three-year block funding to authorities to improve planning, and a new funding formula to reflect the unique population needs of each region.
- Strengthening acute care services by creating inter-linked systems of community hospitals for emergency services, larger community hospitals for specialized care, and regional referral centres. This will ensure acute care is available for everyone, while making better use of resources.
- Protecting Pharmacare by adopting new measures to control costs, including a common drug review process with other provinces to assess the safety and effectiveness of prescription medications.
- Encouraging health authorities to explore partnerships with the private sector for provision of publicly funded services like seniors housing, new building projects or non-clinical services where these enhance patient care — in keeping with the *Canada Health Act*.



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