

Crystal Meth and Youth Addictions Funding Announcement
Minister of Health, George Abbott
March 16, 2006

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Good morning everyone. I bring greetings on behalf of Premier Gordon Campbell and the Government of British Columbia. I would also like to thank everyone involved in organizing today's event and especially Vancouver Coastal Health.

I'm really pleased to be here at Three Bridges Community Centre. Three Bridges is a perfect example of some of the efforts already being made to address youth addictions here in Vancouver. Services include alcohol and drug prevention and counseling geared specifically for the young people of Vancouver. This is exactly what we need at the community level and Three Bridges is making the start of that effort.

Province-wide, every hour we spend approximately \$30 million dollars on the health system in British Columbia. We provide over \$1 billion dollars annually towards mental health and addictions services through the Ministry of Health.

We have made significant progress in the areas of early intervention and building youth-specific services to best meet the needs of our young people in British Columbia. We also know that the province's efforts in addressing crystal meth use have been gaining attention across Canada. In fact, British Columbia is a leader in its efforts to address crystal meth use. This is something we can all be proud of.

The Crystal Meth Strategy, announced last September by Premier Gordon Campbell is a \$7 million dollar investment. The strategy provides funding for targeted treatment services and programs; community-based initiatives, a public awareness campaign; and school-based prevention initiatives.

Today's announcement will help us to build on the foundation of what we have accomplished and allow health authorities to build and expand services and programs for youth addictions and crystal meth use.

Today, I am pleased to announce that the province's six health authorities will receive \$6 million in annual funding for youth addictions treatment services and \$2 million in annual funding for services and programs to address crystal meth use.

Let me talk to you first about Crystal Meth:

- The dangers of Crystal Meth are well known and the cycle of addiction that follows can be devastating.
- We know how it affects individuals AND their families who are supporting them.
- To break the cycle of addiction we need to prevent it before it starts.
- Here in Vancouver Coastal Health this means over \$450,000 in additional funding, year after year, to support a multi-pronged action plan to tackle the challenge of crystal meth use.

The plan consists of four components:

- Prevention and Education; Providing tools and information to support people who have never used crystal meth, and for the 80% of occasional users.
- Prevention and Education: Containment: To keep individuals safe from harm during withdrawal treatment.
- Treatment: Addressing the need of the 20% of users who are dependent or addicted, through a matrix approach.
- Research: Recognizing that information on crystal meth is urgently needed, detailed research will be carried out to explore trends, demographics and social impacts to enable even more effective program development for the future.

It also involves working closely with Vancouver's Methamphetamine Response Committee (MARC), a leading Canadian authority on crystal meth use, to provide and relevant information on the drug and its impact.

In partnership with agencies such as the Ministry of Health, the Vancouver Police Department, and the City of Vancouver, this approach recognizes that there are around 3,000 people who are dependent on crystal meth across Vancouver Coastal Health. Meth affects many populations, which means that a single intervention approach will not meet the needs of all meth users and their families. Vancouver Coastal Health will work with parents, community groups, police, schools, service providers and others to address the problems associated with crystal meth use and dependence in the communities.

Today's announcement also includes \$6 million in annual funding for youth addictions – added to the base budget for all six health authorities.

Youth addiction is so much more than just crystal meth use. Unfortunately, there are many other opportunities for young people to succumb to substance use addiction including alcohol. We want to ensure that there is a continuum of services available to help young people in British Columbia who are struggling to address their addiction. This includes increasing treatment bed capacity for youth with an addiction and treatment programs including supports for crystal meth users and their families.

Here in the lower mainland, funding from today's announcement will be going towards plans to develop a longer-term youth addictions treatment facility. The funding will also be used for Vancouver Coastal Health to enhance youth addictions services including:

- 4 additional withdrawal management beds;
- 2 residential treatment beds;
- 4 new support recovery beds; and
- a pilot Youth DAYTOX program in Richmond, which opened last fall. DAYTOX is a withdrawal management program that treats clients in an outpatient setting.

This annualized youth addictions funding ensures that young people in Vancouver have continuous care in managing their addictions.

Let me share with you some other examples from across the province that our health authorities are implementing because of this funding:

On Vancouver Island they are building 16 new withdrawal management and stabilization beds for substance dependent youth. This means better services for treating youth requiring inpatient detox on Vancouver Island.

Interior Health will be enhancing youth addictions through 16 short-term residential treatment beds.

Fraser Health is planning 10 longer term residential treatment beds for youth with complex needs.

Northern Health is hiring over 10 new youth case managers for youth addictions.

Provincial Health Services are increasing capacity of concurrent disorders outpatient program at BC Children's Hospital by 130 additional patients per year.

Province –wide, we are fortunate to have a wealth of provincial resources that provide information on addictions issues such as the Methamphetamine Response Committee and Crystal Clear, which I mentioned previously.

A coordinated system of care helps ensure that people get the appropriate services needed to match their needs. An effective response in working with addictions – whether with youth or with others struggling with crystal meth use or any other substance – is a well informed, multi-pronged approach that is based on sound evidence. Making this possible are the six health authorities who deliver the health services to manage youth addictions services and treatment programs for crystal meth users.

I also want to thank the organizations who provide support to families and individuals and, in their drive to make resources available to those who need them most.

Thank you.