

**TERRY BEECH**

YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR  
BURNABY NORTH-SEYMOUR

Our Government's Work On

# IMPROVING HEALTHCARE

in Burnaby North-Seymour



Introduction



Stronger Universal Public Health Care



Pharmacare



Dental Care



Canada's Support for Persons with Disabilities



Mental Health



Sports



Indigenous Health



Protecting Canadians and the Environment from Harmful Chemicals



Protecting Women's Rights in Healthcare

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## Introduction

The promise of access to universal public health care is at the heart of Canada's social safety. We have made a promise to each other, as Canadians, that if you get ill or injured or are born with complicated health issues, you don't need to go into debt just to get essential care. Here in Canada, no matter where you live or what you earn, you should always be able to get medical care.

To maintain the core pillar of our social safety net, last year, the federal government announced our \$200 billion ten-year health care plan to clear backlogs, improve primary care, and cut wait times, delivering the health outcomes that Canadians need and deserve.

When people are healthy, our economy is healthy. Since 2015, the government has promised and delivered more. That includes ensuring access to affordable dental care and prescription medications. In December 2023, the new Canadian Dental Care Plan began enrollment and is expected to support nine million uninsured Canadians by 2025.

In February 2024, the federal government introduced legislation to deliver the first phase of national Pharmacare, which will provide universal coverage for most contraceptives and diabetes medications in partnership with provinces and territories. Pharmacare will ensure that every woman can choose the birth control that is best for her and that every woman, no matter how much money she has, can control her own body.

The government's generational transformation of Canada's social safety net is now delivering a new Canada Disability Benefit. Soon, we will begin consultations on how we can better support caregivers in their essential roles in upholding the health and well-being of Canadians.

Budget 2024 highlights new measures to strengthen Canada's social safety net to lift every generation. No matter your age, income, or circumstances, every Canadian deserves to feel secure knowing they will get the care and support they need.

### Some key ongoing action items are:

- Providing nearly \$200 billion over ten years to strengthen universal public health care for Canadians, including \$1.7 billion to support wage increases for personal support workers and related professions and \$5.4 billion for long-term care and home and community care to help people age with dignity close to home.
- Enhancing the Canada Workers Benefit to help hard-working people with full-time, low-wage jobs support themselves and their families, up to \$2,739 will be provided to working families and \$1,590 to single workers through four payments spread throughout the year.
- We are rolling out the Canadian Dental Care Plan to provide dental coverage for uninsured Canadians with a family income of less than \$90,000. Over 1.7 million applications have been approved for eligible seniors, who can visit an oral health provider as early as May of this year.
- Launching the first phase of the National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases will help increase access to and affordability of effective drugs for rare diseases for patients across Canada.

## Stronger Universal Public Health Care

A strong and effective public health care system is at the heart of what it means to be Canadian. Canada boasts world-class doctors, nurses, midwives, personal support workers, hospitals, and research institutions, and Canadians deserve access to world-class care. In February 2023, the government committed nearly \$200 billion over ten years to improve Canada's universal public health.

Since then, agreements have been signed with all provinces and territories that will improve health care for Canadians. Over 700 new spots will be created in Ontario to train doctors, nurses, and other health care workers. In Nova Scotia, improvements in rural and remote communities mean 88 percent of residents will have regular access to a healthcare provider within three years. These are just some of the real benefits Canadians can count on, thanks to federal investments in public health care.

The government has been engaging with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leadership on the \$2 billion Indigenous Health Equity Fund since spring 2023. It looks forward to announcing the program's final design and implementation details in 2024-25.

<b>New Health Care Agreements with Every Province and Territory</b>	
<p>The Canada Health Act helps ensure that all eligible residents of Canada have reasonable access to insured health services without financial barriers. No Canadian should have to pay for medically necessary healthcare services, and the federal government is continuously working to uphold this principle for every Canadian.</p> <p>As part of the federal government's work to improve health outcomes for Canadians, it has signed bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories to deliver the \$25 billion in new funding available in the ten-year health care plan.</p>	
British Columbia	<p>\$976 million over three years announced on October 10, 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an innovative model of care so nurses can spend more time with patients;</li> <li>• Increase the percentage of people in the province who have access to their electronic health information; and,</li> <li>• Increase the percentage of family health service providers that can securely share patient health information.</li> </ul>
<b>Provinces and Territories for Better Health Care</b> (Allocations of Health Funding, 2023-24 to 2032-33)	
British Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Funding (\$5.75 billion)</li> <li>• Total Incremental Funding (\$28.41 billion)</li> </ul>

## More Rural Health and Social Services Worker

The Canadians who work in health care and social services are indispensable for building healthier, more resilient communities and ensuring that individuals have access to the care and support they need to thrive, whether in dental care, mental health care, or more.

Many rural and remote communities struggle to find health and social services workers. Addressing these workforce challenges is critical so that all Canadians can benefit from greater access to the full suite of health and social services they need.

As Canada grows and our population ages, ensuring a healthy population means ensuring enough healthcare professionals in all parts of our vast country. One way to do this is to encourage younger generations to relocate to rural and remote communities, where homes are often cheaper than those in our biggest cities, and health care and social services professionals are needed. By offering student loan forgiveness, the government already encourages doctors and nurses to move to rural and remote communities. It is only fair that other health professionals who spent similar years studying hard are afforded that same opportunity.

## Hire More Health and Social Services Workers

Our government is helping bring more healthcare workers to the communities that need them most. We have increased the maximum forgivable Canada Student Loans by 50 percent for doctors and nurses in underserved rural and remote communities. This will mean up to \$30,000 in loan forgiveness for nurses and \$60,000 for doctors.

## Foreign Health Care Credential Recognition

Every day, people move to Canada with the skills our economy needs. But too often, even though they are well-trained and fully capable, their credentials aren't recognized. Until the barriers to recognizing foreign credentials are removed, neither our workers nor our economy can reach their full potential. We want to work with partners to overcome these barriers and help our economy grow.

Canada faces labour shortages in key sectors, from health care to construction, so we must enable all available workers to contribute. More healthcare workers will help reduce long wait times and make it easier to find a family doctor. More construction workers will help us build more homes faster to ensure everyone can find an affordable place to call home.

In October 2023, federal, provincial, and territorial health ministers committed to streamlining foreign credential recognition so that internationally educated healthcare professionals can get to work more quickly. On January 15, 2024, the government announced \$86 million to support 15 projects through external organizations to increase credential recognition capacity for 6,600 internationally educated healthcare professionals.

- Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$77.1 million over four years, starting in 2025-26, to more effectively integrate internationally educated healthcare professionals into Canada's health workforce by creating 120 specific training positions, increasing assessment capacity and providing support to navigate credential recognition systems.

An estimated 198,000 internationally educated health professionals are employed in Canada, but only 58 percent—114,000 workers—have employment in their chosen field. Red tape holds back thousands of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. This measure will help address that.

<b>Action on Foreign Health Care Credential Recognition</b>	
<p>Canada's doctors and nurses work hard to ensure that Canadians and their families receive timely access to the necessary health services. Unfortunately, many newcomers to this country cannot work in their chosen field due to difficulties recognizing their credentials.</p> <p>This is why federal, provincial, and territorial governments have been working hard and have undertaken various initiatives to improve foreign credential recognition and streamline entry into the labour force for internationally educated health professionals. Examples include:</p>	
<p><b>Bilateral Agreements under <i>Working Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians</i>:</b></p>	<p>A key objective under this \$25 billion federal investment is to support provincial efforts to streamline foreign credential recognition for internationally educated health professionals. The federal government has now signed bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories. These agreements include plans such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Columbia's Health Human Resources Coordination Centre plans to develop incentive programs to remove barriers to credential recognition.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Residency Positions and Practice Ready Assessment (PRA) Programs:</b></p>	<p>PRA programs offer a route to licensure for internationally educated physicians. Several provinces have recently expanded or committed to expanding their PRA programs. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BC is tripling its seats for the Practice Ready Assessment (PRA) program by March 2024.</li> <li>• In April 2022, Saskatchewan announced \$1.1 million to expand its capacity to assess international medical graduates so that they can practice independently in the province.</li> <li>• Alberta’s Mount Royal University is creating 256 new seats for the Bridge to Canadian Nursing Program, supporting internationally educated nurses transitioning into the Canadian healthcare system.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recruitment Initiatives:</b></p>	<p>Several provinces have signed memoranda of understanding with other countries designed to reduce barriers and recruit internationally educated healthcare professionals. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have memoranda of understanding with the Philippines to recruit foreign nurses.</li> <li>• New Brunswick has memoranda of understanding with India and France to expedite the licensure of registered nurses from those countries in the province.</li> <li>• Quebec has mutual recognition agreements with Switzerland and France.</li> <li>• Provinces and territories also have expedited licensure pathways for graduate dental programs for internationally educated healthcare professionals from countries such as the United States, Australia, Ireland, and New Zealand.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial Support:</b></p>	<p>Provinces and territories have expanded grant and bursary programs to offset the cost of training, assessment, licensing and registrations for internationally educated healthcare professionals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, New Brunswick announced a new initiative to reduce financial barriers for up to 300 internationally educated nurses annually.</li> <li>• In July 2021, Manitoba announced plans to provide financial and process support for internationally educated nurses (IENs) looking to become licensed in Manitoba.</li> <li>• From August 18, 2022, to March 31, 2024, Ontario provided temporary reimbursement of registration fees program for inactive or internationally educated nurses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Regulatory and Legislative Reform:</b></p>	<p>Provinces are adjusting eligibility requirements to help integrate internationally educated healthcare professionals into the healthcare system. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In April 2022, Saskatchewan introduced the Labour Mobility and Fair Registration Act to reduce barriers and ensure that skilled workers' credentials can be recognized.</li> <li>• Alberta’s Fair Restrictions Practices Act ensures that qualified individuals entering regulated professions and designated occupations or trades do not face unfair processes or barriers.</li> <li>• New Brunswick’s Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act helps ensure that international accreditation processes are transparent, objective, and fair.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Other Provincial and Territorial Investments:</b></p>	<p>Provinces and territories are also investing more broadly in foreign credential recognition, including examples such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In December 2023, Quebec announced \$130 million to develop an immigrant credential recognition plan.</li> <li>• Ontario's Budget 2022 committed \$230 million, including funding to support up to 1,000 internationally educated nurses to become accredited nurses in Ontario.</li> <li>• In November 2022, Manitoba announced \$200 million for its Health Human Resource Action Plan, which includes funding to train and recruit internationally educated nurses.</li> <li>• In September 2022, Saskatchewan committed \$60 million to create a Health Human Resources Action Plan, which includes funding to train and recruit internationally educated healthcare professionals.</li> <li>• In September 2022, BC announced its multi-year BC Health Workforce Strategy, including support for foreign credential recognition.</li> </ul>
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## Long Term Care

Despite long-term care falling under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, our government is committed to ensuring that all seniors across Canada receive the quality care they deserve by continuously working with our partners. That is why, in addition to the annual \$40 billion healthcare budget allocated to provinces and territories through the Canada Health Transfer, Health Canada will invest a further \$3 billion to specifically address national standards to affect permanent change in the long-term care sector across the country.

Our dedication to healthcare extends beyond long-term care. The GDP-driven growth of the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) is set to inject an additional \$146.0 billion over the next decade, supplementing the \$45.2 billion allocated in 2022-23. Recognizing immediate challenges, on June 30, 2023, our federal government injected a \$2 billion top-up into the CHT to address pressing issues in pediatric hospitals, emergency rooms, and operating rooms.

## Supporting the Public Health Agency

Under the Harper government, Canada's Public Health Agency's (CPHA) funding was left unsustainable if they were going to meet the Healthcare challenges that Canadians face. That is why we have ensured the CPHA will receive \$639 million in funds through 2028, with \$246 million of that investment being implemented in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

## Improving the Healthcare Data

Our government is investing \$620 million into better healthcare data. This will help us enforce the Canada Health Act, ensure provinces properly spend federal health funding, track the number of healthcare workers, and reduce inequities and wait times.

We are committed to bolstering healthcare and providing top-up payments for Canada Health Transfer increases of at least five percent over five years, contingent upon provinces and territories enhancing health data collection and management. The strategic integration involves rolling the last top-up payment into the Canada Health Transfer base at the end of the five years, ensuring a lasting and permanent funding increase. This initiative represents an estimated \$17.5 billion over the next decade, reinforcing our dedication to strengthening the Canada Health Transfer and improving healthcare services for all.

## Ensuring Access to Essential Drugs and Medical Devices

Health product shortages are becoming increasingly frequent and severe due to recurring global supply chain disruptions. Recent examples include the shortages of children's pain medications and baby formula, which left many parents worried about their children's well-being.

These shortages are detrimental to patient health outcomes and impede the ability of our healthcare systems to provide treatment. Access to essential drugs and medical devices is critical to preventing drug rationing by clinicians or patients, delayed or cancelled treatments, or using less effective substitutions.

To mitigate the effects of health product shortages and expedite emergency responses when supply chains fail, Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$3.2 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, to upgrade Health Canada's supply management capacity for drugs and medical devices.

## Pharmacare

In a landmark move towards building a comprehensive national Pharmacare program, the federal government has introduced legislation to help make essential medications more accessible and affordable for Canadians.

Bill C-64, the Pharmacare Act, proposes the foundational principles for the first phase of national universal Pharmacare in Canada and describes the federal government's intent to work with provinces and territories to provide universal, single-payer coverage for a number of contraception and diabetes medications.

This first phase will ensure the effective rollout of Pharmacare while providing immediate support for the healthcare needs of women and people with diabetes. Every woman has the right to choose the family planning options that work best for her, and National Pharmacare ensures cost is not a barrier to that right.

### The First Phase of National Universal Pharmacare

1. Coverage of contraceptives will mean that nine million women in Canada will have better access to contraception and reproductive autonomy, reducing the risk of unintended pregnancies and improving their ability to plan for the future. The cost has consistently been identified as the single most important barrier to accessing these medications, and women unevenly bear the cost. In addition to family planning, many Canadians rely on prescription contraceptives to mitigate a variety of reproductive health concerns and conditions.
2. Diabetes is a complex disease that has no cure. Treatment requires a lifetime of careful, continuous management using safe, effective, yet costly medication. One in four Canadians with diabetes has reported not following their treatment plan due to cost. Improving access to diabetes medications will help improve the health of 3.7 million Canadians with diabetes. It will reduce the risk of serious life-changing health complications such as blindness, heart disease, or amputations. People with diabetes will have access to first-line treatments that lower blood glucose levels, including insulin and metformin, as well as medications that are often used in combination by patients with type 2 diabetes.

Beyond support for diabetes medication, the federal government announced its plan to establish a fund to support access to diabetes devices and supplies. Further details regarding this fund will be announced following discussions with provincial and territorial partners, who will be essential to its roll-out.

The federal government will work towards implementing coverage of these essential medications through existing provincial and territorial Pharmacare programs following negotiations. New federal funding will expand and enhance, rather than replace, existing provincial and territorial spending on public drug benefit programs. This approach ensures that each province and territory's unique needs and existing coverage plans are considered, advancing collaborative federalism where the federal, provincial, and territorial governments work together towards a common goal.

The Pharmacare Act is a concrete step towards the vision of a national Pharmacare program that is comprehensive, inclusive, and fiscally sustainable— today and for the next generation.

Budget 2024 proposes to provide Health Canada with \$1.5 billion over five years, starting in 2024-25, to support the launch of the National Pharmacare Plan.



## Dental Care

### Delivering Dental Care for Canadians

Regular visits to the dentist reduce the risk of tooth decay, gum disease, and other serious health problems that disproportionately affect seniors, such as cardiovascular disease and stroke. Pain and disability associated with poor oral health can affect eating habits, speech, and appearance, which impacts both physical and mental health.

Since the Canadian Dental Care Plan was announced in Budget 2023, historic progress has been made to ensure everyone in Canada can access the dental care they need. Thanks to the interim Canada Dental Benefit, children are already receiving care, and seniors have begun enrolling in the Canadian Dental Care Plan. By 2025, up to nine million uninsured Canadians will have dental coverage.

More than 1.7 million Canadians have already been approved for the Canadian Dental Care Plan since mid-December when seniors over age 87 first became eligible to sign up. As early as May 2024, eligible seniors can visit an oral health professional for their needed care. By May, all seniors aged 65 and older can apply, followed by persons with disabilities with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate and children under 18. All uninsured Canadians between 18 and 64, with a family income up to \$90,000, can apply online and visit a dentist in 2025.

## Canada's Support for Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities face significant barriers to financial security, making it hard to cover the costs of today or save for the expenses of tomorrow. This challenge is compounded by both the added cost of assistive devices and services and difficulties in finding accessible, good-paying jobs, leaving many persons with disabilities below the poverty line. An economy that's fair for everyone makes sure that there is support for those who need it

The federal government's Disability Inclusion Action Plan aims to improve the quality of life for Canadians with disabilities. This plan already includes:

- About \$1.7 billion per year to support persons with severe and prolonged mental and physical impairments through the Disability Tax Credit;
- Up to an additional \$821 every year to workers with disabilities through the Canada Workers Benefit Disability Supplement, beyond the basic Canada Workers Benefit amounts of up to \$1,590 for a worker and up to \$2,739 for a family;
- Ongoing support for the Registered Disability Savings Plan, which has helped 260,000 persons with disabilities save a total of \$8.8 billion since 2008 to provide greater income security;
- Over \$800 million per year through Canada Disability Savings Grants and Bonds; \$722 million through the Workforce Development Agreements in 2024-25, approximately 30 percent of which supports persons with disabilities with training, skills development, and work experience;
- Over \$650 million annually through more generous Canada Student Grants and Loans. Students with disabilities also have access to more generous repayment assistance and loan forgiveness for those with severe permanent disabilities.
- \$105 million in 2024-25 to support the implementation of an employment strategy for persons with disabilities through the Opportunities Fund; and,
- The Child Disability Benefit provides about \$500 million per year to supplement the Canada Child Benefit for parents of children with severe and prolonged disabilities, providing an average of approximately \$3,000 in annual support.

We need to do more. That's why we are launching the **Canada Disability Benefit**—a key pillar in our plan that will directly support those who need it most.

## Launching the Canada Disability Benefit

The government's landmark legislation, the Canada Disability Benefits Act, created the legal framework for a direct benefit for low-income working-age persons with disabilities. This benefit fills a gap in the federal government's social safety net between the Canada Child Benefit and the Old Age Security for persons with disabilities. It is intended to supplement, not replace, existing provincial and territorial income support measures. The federal government is making this new benefit a reality.

Budget 2024 proposes funding of \$6.1 billion over six years, beginning in 2024-25, and \$1.4 billion per year ongoing, for a new Canada Disability Benefit, including costs to deliver the benefit.

Budget 2024 further announces that the government will begin providing payments to eligible Canadians in July 2025, following the successful completion of the regulatory process and consultations with persons with disabilities.

To ensure access to the Canada Disability Benefit for eligible Canadians and to address an anticipated significant financial barrier associated with benefit take-up, Budget 2024 further proposes funding of \$243 million over six years, beginning in 2024-25, and \$41 million per year ongoing, to cover the cost of the medical forms required to apply for the Disability Tax Credit.

In the spirit of "Nothing Without Us," the government will provide meaningful and barrier-free opportunities to collaborate through the regulatory process and ensure the benefit reflects the needs of those receiving it. Persons with disabilities will be consulted on key elements of the benefit's design, including maximum income thresholds and phase-out rates. The benefit design will need to fit the investment proposed in Budget 2024.

The government intends for the Canada Disability Benefits Act to come into force in June 2024 for payments to begin in July 2025. The proposed design is based on a maximum benefit amount of \$2,400 per year for low-income persons with disabilities between 18 and 64. To deliver the benefit as quickly as possible and ensure nationwide eligibility consistency, the proposed Canada Disability Benefit would be available to people with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate. As proposed, this benefit is estimated to increase the financial well-being of over 600,000 low-income persons with disabilities.

The government will continue working with persons with disabilities, health care providers, and tax professionals to find ways to increase take-up and lower the administrative burden of obtaining a Disability Tax Credit certificate.

To avoid persons with disabilities facing clawbacks on their provincial and territorial supports, the federal government is calling on provinces and territories to exempt Canada Disability Benefit payments from counting as income in relation to provincial or territorial supports. The federal government is making this investment due to the inadequacy of disability assistance provided by many provinces, which currently leaves far too many persons with disabilities in poverty.

The Canada Disability Benefit establishes important support for persons with disabilities and will ensure a more fair chance for future generations of persons with disabilities. We know that every dollar matters to those living with a disability. That is why the government aspires to see the combined amount of federal and provincial or territorial income support for persons with disabilities grow to the level of Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), to fundamentally address the rates of poverty experienced by persons with disabilities.

## Expanding the Disability Supports Deduction

To help persons with disabilities have a fair chance at success, the federal government helps cover the cost of certain services (such as attendant care, tutoring, and note-taking) and accessibility tools and devices (such as braille note-taker devices and electronic speech synthesizers). The government is committed to ensuring persons with disabilities have the tools to pursue an education, advance their careers, become entrepreneurs, or achieve their aspirations.

- Budget 2024 announces the government's intention to amend the Income Tax Act to make additional expenses eligible for the Disability Supports Deduction, subject to certain conditions, such as:
  - Service animals trained to perform specific tasks for people with certain severe impairments;
  - Alternative computer input devices, such as assistive keyboards, braille display, digital pens, and speech recognition devices; and,

- Ergonomic work chairs and bed positioning devices, including related assessments.

This proposal is estimated to cost \$5 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, and \$1 million per year, ongoing.

To continually improve the Disability Supports Deduction and meet Canadians' needs, the government will consult persons with disabilities and stakeholders on the list of eligible expenses every four years beginning in 2028.

## Mental Health

### Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund

The Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund is formerly known as the Innovation Strategy. It provides national funding to support the delivery of innovative, community-based programs in mental health promotion for:

- Infants
- Children and Youths
- Young Adults
- Caregivers of Children and Youth

Funding supports priority groups susceptible to mental health inequities, such as:

- First Nations, Inuit and Métis
- LGBTQ2+
- Newcomers and Refugees
- People with Other Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Funding helps to generate new knowledge about what programs and policies work, for whom and in what contexts. The aim is to:

- Address Health Equity
- Build Protective Factors
- Reduce Risk Factors at the Individual and Community Levels
- Address the Underlying Determinants of Health at the Population Level

This approach seeks to contribute to health equity through scale up and systems change to promote positive mental health in Canada.

### Phased Funding Model

The program's phased approach to funding begins with an initial design phase through to the eventual scale up of mental health promotion interventions, pending assessment. The timeline for funded projects follows 3 phases:

- **Phase 1:** up to 18 months for initial design, delivery and partnership development
- **Phase 2:** up to 4 years for full implementation with partners to deliver the intervention across settings and evaluate
- **Phase 3:** up to 3 years for scale up to expand implementation to achieve system-wide impact for sustainability

## An Innovative Approach

This innovative approach to mental health promotion focuses on 6 key characteristics:

1. Support for social Innovation
2. Investment in large-scale Projects
3. Support, capacity-building and flexibility for projects
4. Special focus on knowledge development and exchange; and evaluation
5. Emphasis on multi-sectoral partnerships from within and outside the health sector
6. Spirit of continuous learning and critical reflection

Through the MHP-IF, the Government of Canada is investing \$46.3 million from 2019-2029 to promote mental health among children, youth, and their caregivers.

## Kids Help Phone

The mental health challenges facing young people, particularly Gen Z, have only grown more complex in recent years, whether it is from problems at home, online, or at school. Their emotional and mental health needs require a competent, understanding, and sympathetic ear.

Kids Help Phone is Canada's only 24/7 e-mental health service, offering free, confidential support to young people in English, French, and 100 other languages. Because every child deserves the best start in life, the government is investing to ensure Kids Help Phone is there for any younger Canadian who needs it.

## Launching a New Youth Mental Health Fund

Young Canadians are facing high levels of stress and mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety. Many of them are still in school or just starting their careers and are struggling with the costs of private mental health care. The rising cost of living has further exacerbated this issue. Our government remains committed to ensuring that future generations have the access they need for mental health support so that they can have a healthy start to adulthood.

Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$500 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, to create a new Youth Mental Health Fund to help younger Canadians access the mental health care they need.

The new Youth Mental Health Fund will help community health organizations provide more care for younger Canadians and better equip these organizations to refer youth to other mental health services within their networks and partnerships.

Youth must have what they need to build a happy, healthy adult start. Mental health care is an essential part of ensuring every young Canadian can reach their full potential, which also helps Canada's economy reach its full potential.

To ensure this funding reaches communities of all sizes and needs, provinces must dedicate at least 20% of their agreement-based funding to northern, rural and Indigenous communities.

These investments build on the Canada Community-Building Fund, which offers permanent, flexible infrastructure funding to communities in return for making progress on housing priorities and reporting on how infrastructure funding is prioritized to help meet housing needs.

## Supporting the Mental Health of Black Canadians

Black Canadians have historically faced disproportionate social and systemic challenges, including experiences of racism and discrimination, socioeconomic inequality, a lack of access to culturally appropriate services, and stigma related to accessing mental health care.



To close these gaps, the Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund supports community-based and culturally focused initiatives that aim to increase health equity and address the underlying determinants of mental health, including anti-Black racism.

- Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$4 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, for the Public Health Agency of Canada to continue supporting initiatives through the Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund that aim to increase health equity and address mental health and its determinants for Black Canadians.
- \$49.6 million to establish mental health supports for Black public servants and dedicated career development programs, including to support career advancement of Black public service leaders in executive positions; and,
- \$9.6 million for community-based mental health initiatives through the Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund.

## Military Mental Health

We have less comprehensive information about Veterans available to us, but we are working to improve our knowledge of the Veteran community. Based on the information available, it would seem that suicide can be more common among Veterans as compared to the Canadian population. We are working to do everything we can for Canada's military members and Veterans.

Below are some major programs and actions our government has committed to:

- The Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS) program offers confidential peer support to CAF members, Veterans and their families impacted by an operational stress injury. The support is provided by trained peer support and family peer support coordinators and volunteers, who typically have first-hand experience with these injuries.
- Recently, the CAF implemented a mental health awareness and resilience training program, the Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR), to increase early awareness of distress, encourage care-seeking, normalize mental health challenges, and provide evidence-based skills to manage the demands of service and daily life. R2MR has contributed to a significant increase in care-seeking among CAF personnel as well as continued erosion of stigma and other barriers to care.
- Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) greatly expanded its face-to-face service presence, reopening all nine previously closed VAC offices, opening a new office in Surrey, BC, and undertaking regular on-the-ground outreach to Veterans and families in remote and northern communities.
- Telemedicine has been made available at the majority of Canadian Forces Health Services (CFHS) clinics to provide access to specialists, in the language of choice, regardless of geographical location. This capability can also provide sub-specialty care (such as mental health care for personnel employed in remote geographic areas) and to manage waiting lists more effectively. The VAC-funded Operational Stress Injury Network has expanded to 11 clinics across Canada, each offering telemental health services, with many satellite sites for Veterans in remote regions.
- CAF and VAC have created a jointly-managed Seamless Transition Task Force, with four dedicated implementation teams, to ensure a coordinated approach and oversight of all key elements of the CAF-VAC transition, from CAF member to Veteran, and to make sure that all members and Veterans get the services they need as they leave active military service.
- Leveraging the expertise, best practices and lessons learned from the Joint Personnel Support Unit (JPSU) and its partners, the CAF Transition Group (CAF TG) is being established to promote a seamless transition into post-military life for our members. This will reduce the stressors on our members as they transfer and include suicide prevention considerations. VAC personnel will be integrated into the process.
- VAC has hired more than 400 new full-time staff to ensure high levels of quality service, and is working to fulfill a commitment to bring its Veteran to Case Manager ratio to 25:1, to guarantee that all Veterans get the service and attention they need, with reduced wait times and fewer barriers.
- CAF has entered into long-term partnership with private sector organizations to build awareness and break down the stigma associated with mental illness.
- VAC is making four-year investments of \$4M in a new Veteran Emergency Fund to assist Veterans in urgent and unique

situations, and \$13.9M in a new Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund, that will promote innovative research and services.

- In order to better understand the biological underpinnings of mental illness and to leverage technology for more effective interventions, we are researching new brain-imaging capabilities (PET MRI, PEER study, etc). We are also exploring emerging treatments that specifically target suicidal ideation.

This Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy details our Vision, our Mission, our lines of effort (as outlined on page 15), and the many actions undertaken to realise this vision. It aligns with the Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention, builds on the recent Expert Panel Report, and draws from the latest research on suicide, to create a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention for military members and Veterans. The CAF and VAC maintain the strongest commitment to suicide prevention and will continue to work together, now under the aegis of this Joint Strategy, to support and serve all members, Veterans, and their families.

**Below are some additional tools for immediate support:**

**Member Assistance Program**

1-800-268-7708

Call for a confidential talk 24 hours a day, everyday

**Family Information Line**

1-800-866-4546

Call seven days a week, 24 hours a day

## Establishing a Right to Disconnect

Everyone needs some downtime; it is essential for well-being and mental health. As work in many industries has become increasingly digital, workers find it increasingly difficult to disconnect from their devices and inboxes after hours and on weekends. This has particularly impacted Millennial and Gen Z workers, who have worked their careers without firm separation between work and personal time.

The government is taking action to restore work-life balance for the many workers in federally regulated industries, including but not limited to financial services, telecommunications, and transportation, by moving forward with a right to disconnect from work outside of their working hours.

Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$3.6 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, and \$0.6 million ongoing to enable the Labour Program at Employment and Social Development Canada to implement legislative amendments to the Canada Labour Code that would require employers in federally regulated sectors to establish a right to disconnect policy limiting work-related communication outside of scheduled working hours.

This is expected to benefit up to 500,000 employees in federally regulated sectors.

Further, regarding worker misclassification, Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency will enter into necessary data-sharing agreements to facilitate inspections and enforcement.

## Sports

### Supporting Canada's National Athletes

Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$16 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, to the Department of Canadian Heritage for the Sport Support Program. This will help create a safer and more welcoming sports environment for athletes, from amateurs to Olympians. Priorities will include preventing and addressing maltreatment, supporting those with concussions and mental health issues, and advancing inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

## Community Sports for Everyone

Community sports for youth, seniors, and newcomers can help people live healthier, happier lifestyles and feel a greater sense of belonging and connectedness with their community. Helping more Canadians of all ages build a healthier life can mean fewer trips to the doctor, lower risk of major life-changing illnesses, and, in general, aging with more energy and independence. Sport enables people to participate more fully in the economy and lowers the burden on our healthcare systems, reducing costs in the long term.

- Budget 2024 proposes to provide the Department of Canadian Heritage with \$15 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, to support community sports programming and reduce barriers to sport participation.

This funding makes sports more accessible for young Canadians by helping cover the costs of community sports programs, ensuring every child has the opportunity to participate.

**If you're in immediate danger or need urgent medical support call 9-1-1.**

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide call or text 9-8-8. Support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you're experiencing family or gender-based violence you can access a crisis line in your province or territory.

### Important numbers in BC

- VictimLinkBC: 1-800-563-0808 (toll-free, 24/7, multilingual service available)
- Battered Women's Support Services Crisis Line: 1-855-687-1868
- BC 24/7 Community and Social Services Helpline: 211
- Helpline for Children in BC: 604-310-1234
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- Reporting child abuse: 1-800-663-9122
- Seniors Abuse and Information Line: 1-866-437-1940
- Youth Against Violence Line: 1-800-680-4264
- WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre's Crisis and Information Line: 1-877-392-7583

## Indigenous Health

Everyone in Canada deserves the support they need to live a healthy and prosperous life. However, due to colonialism's legacies, access to opportunities and support can be further from reach in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. The federal government is committed to supporting Indigenous communities in building healthy communities.

Since 2015, the federal government has invested significantly to build more homes, deliver better health care, and ensure Indigenous communities have clean drinking water. Every Indigenous person deserves access to what they need to build a healthy and vibrant life.

Budget 2024 invests in better health care and critical infrastructure, co-developed and co-led with Indigenous communities, to ensure better health outcomes for all Indigenous Peoples.

**Key Ongoing Actions:**

- \$2 billion over ten years, starting in 2024-25, for a distinctions-based Indigenous Health Equity Fund. This fund, currently being co-developed with Indigenous partners, will address the unique challenges Indigenous Peoples face when accessing health care services and support immediate and long-term Indigenous health priorities.
- \$811 million over five years, beginning in 2023-24, to support medical travel and maintain medically necessary services through the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program, including mental health services, dental and vision care, and medications.
- \$8.2 billion over ten years, starting in 2023-24, to renew the First Nations Health Authority Funding Agreement in British Columbia.
- \$1.6 billion over two years, starting in 2024-25, to ensure access to safe drinking water and treated wastewater in First Nations communities.

## Addressing the Overdose Crises in Municipalities and Indigenous Communities

Too many Canadians have been lost to the ongoing overdose crisis facing communities from coast to coast to coast. Increasing drug toxicity and high opioid-related death rates remain urgent public health concerns across the country. The overdose crisis and toxic illegal drug supplies take the lives of an average of 22 Canadians per day—many of whom are experiencing homelessness and acute mental health needs.

Building on historic healthcare investments, including in mental health and substance use, Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$150 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, to Health Canada for an Emergency Treatment Fund open to municipalities and Indigenous communities to help provide rapid responses to emergent, critical needs related to the opioid crisis.

## First Nations and Inuit Health

The federal government is working with Indigenous partners to improve access to healthcare services. Co-developed essential health care reforms aim to ensure Indigenous people feel safe and heard while accessing health care services in Canada, no matter where they live.

To ensure First Nations and Inuit across the country have fair and equal access to the healthcare they deserve, Budget 2024 proposes to provide:

- \$562.5 million in 2024-25 to support medically necessary services through the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program, which supports a range of benefits for First Nations and Inuit people, including mental health services, medical travel, medications, and more;
- \$390.4 million over four years, starting in 2024-25, to build or renovate health facilities, including to support the Virtual Health Hub led by the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. This funding will also improve the safety of primary care workers in remote and isolated on-reserve First Nations communities;
- \$104.9 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, for health transformation initiatives to support First Nations self-determination in the design and delivery of health services in their communities; and,
- \$57.5 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, which builds on previous federal investments to construct a mercury care home in Grassy Narrows First Nation.



## Supporting Indigenous Mental Health

Mental health is health. Due to the legacy of colonialism, Indigenous Peoples face unique challenges when it comes to mental health and well-being, which may lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use, and depression.

A high proportion of Indigenous youth are diagnosed with mood and anxiety disorders, as well as chronic health conditions. First Nations youth living on reserve reported low mental health nearly twice as often as non-Indigenous youth. Indigenous youth struggle to access health care due to long transportation times and costs from missing school or work.

Supporting Indigenous people's access to mental health doesn't just mean increasing access to care. It also means ensuring services respect, value, and use cultural knowledge, approaches, languages, and ways of knowing. These investments aim to end the legacies of intergenerational trauma and build up healthier, stronger, and more resilient future generations.

Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$630.2 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, to support Indigenous people's access to mental health services, including through distinctions-based mental wellness strategies.

## Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism in Health Care

Anti-Indigenous racism has tragic consequences for Indigenous Peoples seeking health care. In 2020, tragic circumstances contributed to the death of Joyce Echaquan at the Centre Hospitalier régional De Lanaudière in Quebec, near the Atikamekw community of Manawan. In memory of her death, Joyce's Principle was created, which aims to guarantee all Indigenous people the right to equitable access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services. It also includes the right to enjoy physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Recognizing and respecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional and living knowledge in all aspects of health is essential to fulfilling Joyce's Principle. This measure aims to help foster health systems free from racism and discrimination where Indigenous Peoples are respected and safe by supporting patient advocates, health system navigators, midwives, and birth support workers, as well as initiatives to increase Indigenous representation in the health profession.

- Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$167.6 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, to combat anti-Indigenous racism in health care to help ensure Indigenous Peoples are treated with respect and safety.

## Protecting Canadians and the Environment from Harmful Chemicals

Chemicals are found everywhere—in consumer products, industrial processes, hospitals, laboratories, and the natural environment. And the safe and effective management of harmful chemicals is essential to protecting people and the environment from the risks of exposure, such as higher rates of cancer.

The federal government is ensuring industry does not cut corners when it comes to providing products and services to consumers, to protect the health and safety of Canadians and our environment—today and for the next generation.

- Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$190.9 million over five years, starting in 2024-25, with \$0.1 million in remaining amortization, to Health Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada to reduce human and environmental exposure to harmful chemicals through its Chemicals Management Plan, which protects Canadians from being exposed to some 30,000 chemicals, including by advancing scientific research to phase out animal toxicity testing.
- Budget 2024 also announces the government will begin work this year to enhance the Chemical Management Plan's existing cost recovery framework, ensuring big industry pays its fair share, to protect Canadians and the environment.

## Protecting Women's Rights in Healthcare

As part of its Feminist International Assistance Policy, Canada made a ten-year commitment to advance the health and rights of women and girls around the world. The Ten-Year Commitment to Health and Rights (2020-2030) is a bold and ambitious commitment to increase Canada's global health and rights funding to \$1.4 billion per year, beginning in 2023. Half of this funding is dedicated to sexual and reproductive health and rights. This commitment drives progress to address critical, unmet needs to improve global health and strengthen human rights.

### Projects supported by this funding include:

- Nutrition International, which enabled teachers to deliver weekly iron and folic acid supplements to over 2 million adolescent girls, averting thousands of cases of anemia and helping girls stay in school.
- Profamilia delivered a comprehensive sexuality education model to over 10,300 adolescents in eight municipalities of Colombia.

In March 2023, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranked Canada as the top donor by share of assistance supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls for 2022. This was Canada's fourth consecutive year at the top of the rankings.