



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

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NEWS RELEASE

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BC Budget 2016: Missed opportunity to prioritize the mental health of British Columbians

More action needed to put mental health and physical health on an equal footing says Canadian Mental Health Association

Vancouver, British Columbia – Yesterday’s release of the 2016 provincial budget *could* have been a watershed moment in progress toward treating the physical and mental health needs of British Columbians equally, Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division CEO Bev Gutray said today.

“The key message from yesterday’s budget release is the fact BC continues to outperform other provinces financially. A budget surplus of \$264M, a \$100M prosperity fund, and a 3% increase in health spending, all represent an opportunity to spend smart, while doing all we can to intervene early and provide timely access to good quality mental health and addictions treatment and support for children, youth and adults to recover in community. Instead, the government’s priority is debt reduction,” said Gutray.

Here is our take on Budget 2016 when it comes to mental health and addictions.

Budget 2016:

- Commits an extra \$217M over three years for the Ministry of Children and Family Development—this additional funding addresses the overall \$100M reduction in MCFD funding since 2008 in targeted areas of critical importance like child protection and children and youth in care. *We are pleased to see the government acting to address this critical need.*
- Does not mention any corresponding increase in resources for MCFD’s Child and Youth Mental Health Services. There has been a 1.44% increase since 2012 largely to cover public sector pay increases. *The status quo will continue and more than two thirds of young people and their families in need will go without the benefit of early intervention and treatment.* The consequences of not intervening early are clear. Research from the Canadian Institute of Health Information (2015) shows that for the 20% of people who experience a mental illness, the majority will experience onset during childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. *This lost opportunity is significant.*
- Commits an extra \$170M over three years to increase disability assistance by \$77 per month—almost 60% of people on disability assistance live with a mental illness or addiction. This modest increase is noted, but it in no way matches the increased cost of living in BC since the last rate change in 2007. *Indexing would be a bold step in the right direction.* Any increase is partially cancelled out for disability assistance recipients who will stop receiving subsidized bus passes or transportation subsidies, meaning for some, the increase is just \$11 per month. Living in BC with no real increase in disability assistance since 2007 forces many to rely on food banks to meet the costs of daily living.
- Commits to add to the current spend of \$1.4B on mental health treatment and supports by allocating \$101M for a new 105-bed mental health facility in Coquitlam—this new facility replaces existing mental health services that have operated out of Burnaby and do not add a lot

of new capacity to the system. Resourcing for youth integrated service hubs across the province was welcome news, but the province can go further. *The Canadian Mental Health Association believes that every dollar invested in increasing acute care capacity should be matched to a dollar invested to increase community-based capacity in mental health and addictions services and supports.*

“Budget 2016 does not substantively respond to the recommendations of the Select Standing Committees on Finance and Children and Youth, *which have called for significant targeted investments in mental health and addictions, especially for young people,*” said Gutray. “BC might be leading the pack in overall health, but according to the Conference Board of Canada’s 2013 research on self-reported mental health, we are the fourth province from bottom. We get a B-grade. *We will continue to fall behind until we put mental health on the same footing as physical health in our provincial spending.*”

About the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA):

CMHA is Canada’s most established mental health charity and the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health. CMHA helps people access the resources they need to maintain and improve mental health, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness. Each year in BC alone, CMHA serves more than 100,000 people all across the province. To learn more about CMHA in BC visit www.cmha.bc.ca.

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