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BC Budget 2025: A Critical Moment to Expand Healthcare Access

VANCOUVER – The British Columbia Naturopathic Doctors (BCND) recognize the significant economic pressures facing all Canadians and the difficult decisions governments must make in response. While the BC budget tabled on March 4th, 2025, protects and moderately increases funding to healthcare these funds do not address the enormous uncertainty and pressures placed on the system.

For too long, alternative solutions that could immediately improve access to care have been overlooked. These uncertain times demand an all-hands-on-deck approach, where every available healthcare professional is empowered to contribute. The status quo continues to leave patients feeling denied access to the care they need and that must change.

Despite ongoing shortages and increasing patient demand, Budget 2025 offers only modest increases in health funding. Over the next three years, \$7.7 billion is earmarked for new program spending, including \$4.2 billion for health, mental health, and addictions services, and \$443 million for the NDP's primary care strategy equating to just \$2.5 billion per year. While the \$15.5 billion investment in infrastructure, including hospitals and long-term care facilities, is significant, these buildings serve little purpose without the healthcare professionals to staff them, especially if workforce shortages continue to force closures.

"British Columbians deserve a healthcare system that works for them, not one that restricts or limits their options," said Dr. Vanessa Lindsay, ND & Board President. "Now is the time to unlock every possible solution, and that means fully integrating naturopathic doctors into healthcare delivery. Patients are waiting too long for care, and this budget does not remove the barriers preventing them from accessing a broader range of providers who have the skills and ability to provide necessary and needed healthcare."

Additionally, small business owners, including NDs, are expected to feel the financial strain of this budget. Rising operational costs, a projected economic slowdown, and the absence of targeted relief for small businesses place independent healthcare providers in an increasingly difficult position. Without meaningful action, many NDs worry about their ability to continue offering essential services to their communities.

The economic uncertainty is further compounded by new U.S. tariffs, which could have widespread effects on British Columbia's economy. The budget estimates these tariffs could reduce government revenues by up to \$1.4 billion, exacerbating fiscal challenges. In the face of these pressures, the government must prioritize healthcare solutions that maximize efficiency, leverage all available providers, and ensure British Columbians have access to timely, high-quality care.

"NDs are frontline healthcare providers, but we are also small business owners," noted Dr. Lindsay. "This budget does not ease the financial pressures we are facing. Instead, it reinforces a system that is already stretched beyond capacity at a time when economic challenges, including the impact of U.S. tariffs, could further strain both patients and providers."

BCND calls on the provincial government to recognize this pivotal moment and take decisive action. Every available healthcare professional must be part of the "team Canada" solution, and that includes naturopathic doctors. The time for exclusion is over. British Columbians need access to the care they deserve, and they need it now.

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