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BC Budget 2026: Infrastructure Spending Alone Will Not Fix Access to Care

VANCOUVER – The Association of British Columbia Naturopathic Doctors (BCND) recognizes the fiscal pressures facing the province and the difficult choices governments must make. Budget 2026 projects a \$9.6 billion deficit for 2025-26 and \$13.3 billion for 2026-27, while committing \$37.7 billion in taxpayer-supported capital investment over three years, including \$11.1 billion for new and upgraded health-care facilities.

New buildings are important. But buildings do not treat patients.

Budget 2026 adds \$2.8 billion in new health funding, including capacity expansion, mental-health treatment, and coverage for diabetes medications and menopausal hormone therapy. These are areas where naturopathic doctors are regulated and have the appropriate training, yet patients remain blocked by outdated coverage policies and integration gaps. Until those barriers are addressed, new spending will not translate into better access to care.

Hundreds of thousands of British Columbians still do not have an MSP-covered primary care provider like a family doctor or nurse practitioner, and wait times for primary and specialist care remain long. Budget 2026 does not meaningfully address the workforce and policy barriers that prevent patients from accessing the care already available in their communities.

There are approximately 900 naturopathic doctors in British Columbia, caring for tens of thousands of patients each year in community-based clinics. Many of these patients are older adults or people managing complex chronic conditions who need ongoing, coordinated care.

As the population ages and care becomes more complex, improving access will require using the regulated providers already caring for patients across the province, not relying only on recruiting new medical doctors from outside the province. Expanding the role of naturopathic doctors is not about creating a two-tier system. It is about strengthening the public system by improving access to regulated care so fewer patients are pushed into emergency rooms or unregulated alternatives.

Naturopathic doctors are regulated primary-care providers delivering primary, preventative, and chronic disease care across the province. Yet patients continue to face unnecessary barriers to accessing these services because of outdated policies, coverage gaps, and limits that prevent providers from contributing fully within team-based care.

“British Columbians deserve a system that uses every qualified provider available,” said Dr. Vanessa Lindsay, ND and Board President. “Naturopathic doctors are trained, licensed, and already caring for patients. Continuing to invest in infrastructure without addressing workforce integration will not solve access to care.”

Budget 2026 also reflects rising pressures on community-based clinics. Naturopathic doctors are small business owners operating essential health services in their communities. Rising costs, economic uncertainty, and regulatory transition expenses are increasing strain on clinics that patients rely on.

“Community clinics are part of the primary-care system,” said Dr. Lindsay. “When policies ignore them, patients wait longer and the system becomes more expensive.”

BCND calls on the provincial government to take practical steps that improve access now:

- Integrate naturopathic doctors into primary-care planning and team-based care
- Advance scope updates that reflect naturopathic doctors’ accredited education and clinical training
- Remove coverage barriers that prevent patients from accessing ND prescribing, diagnostic, and treatment services

British Columbians need timely access to care. Naturopathic doctors are ready to be part of the solution.

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