

NEWS RELEASE

BUDGET 2018 LIGHT ON SPECIFIC INVESTMENT FOR PREVENTATIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS HEALTHCARE IN BC

CMHA BC welcomes investment in housing and other crucial services, but says much work remains to build a mental health system that supports people before they are in crisis.

Victoria, BC - (February 20, 2018): The BC government's 2018 provincial budget makes long overdue investments in crucial services that will support the wellbeing of people throughout the province, but much work remains in terms of moving our focus on mental health services upstream to support people before they are in crisis and supporting our most vulnerable community members.

"There is no doubt that new investment in affordable housing, child care, and Indigenous rights and reconciliation will help to keep people healthy and support them to live with increased dignity," said Bev Gutray, the CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division. "We know that these are key services to impact people's health – they support people to stay well and they assist people who are experiencing mental illness and addiction to recover."

However, while the focus in improved affordability is welcome, CMHA BC notes that many of the new investments will not immediately help the most vulnerable members of our community.

"People with mental health and addiction problems are more likely to rely on disability and social assistance benefits, but we are disappointed that Budget 2018 did not offer more new investments that will improve their lives in the short term," noted Gutray. "The increases to rent supplements for seniors and low-income workers are needed, but people on disability and social assistance are generally not eligible for those programs – they remain forced to try to live on inadequate benefit levels including only \$375 per month for housing."

Aside from affordability measures, Budget 2018 was light on new announcements or detailed commitments on mental health and addictions healthcare beyond crisis-level responses. New funds appear to continue to prioritize hospital care, with no express commitments to support people's mental wellness in their community before they are in health crisis.

"We are heartened to hear that the provincial government is committed to 'delivering services that people count on' because we strongly believe the wellbeing of British Columbians is primarily determined in schools, at home, at work and in community," stated Gutray. "However, if we want to build a mental health and addiction system that people can count on, we need to move away from relying on police, corrections and emergency rooms as the main entry point to services. BC must make firm commitments to build a system that supports people to seek out and receive high quality supports earlier on, before they are in a mental health crisis."

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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. For mental health and addiction information and resources visit www.cmha.bc.ca

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