
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020AEST0042-001361
July 23, 2020

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

B.C. students to get health education for in-demand jobs

VANCOUVER – Students throughout British Columbia have more opportunities to train for careers as health-care professionals, thanks to focused investments in post-secondary education and training.

“For years, British Columbians have been calling for more trained health professionals in their communities,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. “We heard that call to action and we’re investing in valuable, in-demand training in every corner of the province so that students preparing for careers in health care, or health professionals upgrading their skills, are able to provide quality health care when and where it is needed. It is because of the work of these unsung heroes in health care that we are at a place to safely build back the best B.C.”

This week, government announced more than \$4.4 million for health profession-related education and training at B.C. post-secondary institutions. This funding is in addition to annual funding of more than \$125 million for health education programs around B.C.

Programs include training for health-care assistants, anesthesia assistants, mental health and community support workers and programs for nurses.

These one-time investments allow government to respond to local and emerging needs and are in addition to ongoing support of health-care education programs at post-secondary institutions throughout B.C.

The funding also creates opportunities for existing health professionals to further enhance their skills. Registered nurses and other health professionals can access short, targeted training modules through the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) and respiratory therapists can access one-on-one clinical refreshers.

“We are committed to training, recruiting and hiring a new generation of health-care professionals at all levels, including respiratory therapists and critical care nurses, who are vital members of the health-care team,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “Respiratory therapists and nurses working with patients during the COVID-19 pandemic have a high-risk role because of their hands-on work treating patients with breathing difficulties and I thank them for all they do.”

During a physically distanced visit to Vancouver Community College (VCC), Mark announced funding for two Lower Mainland post-secondary institutions.

VCC received \$750,000 to expand its bridging program aimed at licensed practical nurses who choose to continue their education by completing a bachelor of science in nursing degree. In

addition, BCIT received funding of \$227,000 to enable registered nurses working in critical care settings to train in advanced skills.

Other B.C. post-secondary institutions that received additional funding to support health-related programs include:

- Camosun College
- Coast Mountain College
- College of New Caledonia
- North Island College
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
- Okanagan College
- Thompson Rivers University

These latest investments bring the total new funding for health education to approximately \$46 million since 2017. The investments will result in thousands of new health-care professionals and workers throughout the province. They include funding for:

- a new sonography program at College of New Caledonia;
- nurse practitioner program expansions at the University of British Columbia, University of Victoria and the University of Northern British Columbia;
- additional specialty nursing seats at the British Columbia Institute of Technology;
- 100 additional health-care assistant seats throughout B.C.;
- startup and program launch funding for the northeast nursing program in Fort St. John, and a new sonography program at Camosun College;
- startup funding for physiotherapy program expansion and distribution to Prince George.

The Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training works with the Ministry of Health to support areas of highest need for the health-sector workforce. The Ministry of Health helps to fund some health-education seats through the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (e.g., specialty nursing and some one-time health-care assistant funding).

Promoting and protecting the public health-care system is a shared priority between government and the BC Green Party caucus, and is part of the Confidence and Supply Agreement.

Two backgrounders follow.

Contact:

Sean Leslie
Communications Director
Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and
Training
250 356-8485

BACKGROUND 1

For Immediate Release
2020AEST0042-001361
July 23, 2020

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

What people are saying about health-care investments

Ajay Patel, president and CEO, Vancouver Community College (VCC) –

“Thank you to both the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training and the Ministry of Health for investing in VCC and in our students. This funding will make us stronger as we continue to provide the highest quality health-care graduates, especially important during this challenging time with COVID-19. I am most proud of how the delivery of our health programs give students the credits they need to seamlessly ladder from one program to another, providing them with more educational and career opportunities.”

Kathy Kinloch, president, British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) –

“BCIT has long been recognized for its critical role in educating many of B.C.’s front-line healthcare professionals. Their work has been particularly critical in helping our health-care system successfully navigate the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful for this additional funding to help registered nurses advance their skills to support and strengthen this ongoing effort.”

Christine Sorensen, president, BC Nurses’ Union (BCNU) –

“There is a critical need for highly trained, skilled licensed practical nurses (LPN), registered practical nurses (RPN) and registered nurses (RN) in British Columbia, especially as the province’s health-care system navigates the COVID-19 pandemic. BCNU is pleased today’s announcement will create more specialty nursing seats, expand nursing programs to areas beyond the Lower Mainland, and provide the opportunity for LPNs to ladder into RN positions. Investing in health education is key to providing opportunities for all nurses and health-care professionals.”

Jennifer Whiteside, secretary-business manager, Hospital Employees’ Union –

“B.C.’s public post-secondary institutions are well-positioned to support the education and training of new and existing health-care workers in communities across the province. These are smart investments in our health-care workforce and will help to protect the delivery of health care to British Columbians in the future.”

Val Avery, president, Health Sciences Association –

“Ensuring we have enough trained health-care professionals is at the heart of a robust and sustainable health-care system. Health science professions, like respiratory therapists, medical laboratory and imaging technologists, dietitians, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers and many, many others, are critical to this goal. The work of these

professionals is often invisible, but COVID-19 has shone a bright light on their important contributions. Yet in many of these fields we are experiencing shortages. We applaud the work government has done to open up opportunities, and are pleased to see more investment in training to ensure we have the people we need to support the public health-care system we all depend on.”

Stephanie Smith, president, BC Government and Service Employees’ Union –

“One of the key lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic is that government matters. So it’s incredibly gratifying to see our government once again commit to robust public services and reject the type of austerity measures we see becoming more popular in other jurisdictions. Providing upskilling opportunities for existing health-care professionals and expanding training to bring more people into these professions are critical steps to addressing the recruitment and retention challenges in the sector and making sure British Columbians have access to health-care services in their communities.

Ananda Crouse, LPN and bachelor degree of science in nursing (BSN) student –

“I came to VCC as an HCA to bridge to become an LPN. Now I am back in the LPN-to-BSN bridging program. VCC is among the few places that offer a bridging program for LPNs to become BSN registered nurses. LPNs need more opportunities to bridge to become RNs. Who is better to become an RN than an LPN who has skills and experience in the field of nursing!”

Sarah Fast, BCIT high acuity specialty nursing alumna and RN, Fraser Health Authority –

“The BCIT Focused Education Preparation Advancing Frontline Registered Nurses course was valuable and relevant in helping me quickly upskill to provide support to critical-care patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information was well organized and easy to follow. Overall, I am confident that I completed the course with the knowledge to assist in the care of ventilated patients.”

Contact:

Sean Leslie
Communications Director
Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and
Training
250 356-8485

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect

BACKGROUND 2

For Immediate Release
2020AEST0042-001361
July 23, 2020

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

Information about health education funding

Examples of health-care education funding in the Lower Mainland since 2017

- In December 2019, the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) broke ground for an innovative new health sciences centre. The centre will provide the simulated health-care environments that will replicate the work environments for a variety of hospitals and laboratories.
- The Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training has invested \$26 million for health education and training, and approximately \$78 million for capital and infrastructure related to health education at post-secondary institutions in the Lower Mainland.
- Health program expansions at post-secondary institutions in the Lower Mainland are anticipated to produce:
 - 16 additional graduates per year from the diagnostic medical sonography expansion at BCIT;
 - 15 additional graduates per year from the nurse practitioner expansion at the University of British Columbia; and
 - 1,000 registered nurses (RN) trained in advanced skills every year by the specialty nursing program at BCIT.

Health education capital and infrastructure investments in B.C.

Government has invested more than \$180 million for capital and infrastructure projects throughout B.C. since 2017, including:

- Camosun College – \$40.3 million for the Centre for Health and Wellness, opened in September 2019.
- Vancouver Island University – \$20.9 million for the Health and Science Centre, opened in October 2018.
- Okanagan College – \$15.4 million for the Health Sciences Centre, expected opening fall 2020.
- Thompson Rivers University - \$8 million for the Nursing and Population Health Building, expected opening fall 2020.
- College of New Caledonia – \$1.5 million funding for renovation and equipment for the Northern Diagnostic Medical Sonography program in Prince George; the first time the program has been offered outside the Lower Mainland.

Post-secondary institutions receiving funding for health programs

BCIT

- \$227,000 to upskill RNs to work in critical care settings (COVID-19 response)

Camosun College

- \$310,000 for start-up activities related to health-care assistant and startup and delivery of an educational assistant and community support cohort on the Westshore

Coast Mountain College

- \$240,952 for health-care assistant – Kitimat
- \$72,000 for introduction to health program (introduces students to careers in health care)

College of New Caledonia

- \$180,000 for health-care assistant program - Quesnel

North Island College

- \$116,985 for health-care assistant program – Comox Valley – evenings and weekends
- \$233,970 for health-care assistant program – Campbell River – part-time
- \$120,000 for access to practical nurses program – allows mid-career health-care assistants to train as licensed practical nurses (LPN)
- \$190,000 for practical nursing program expansion pilot – Comox Valley
- \$114,000 for community mental health worker – Port Hardy

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

- \$250,000 for health-care assistant program – Indigenous health-care assistant
- \$250,000 for access to practical nursing program (allows mid-career HCAs to train as LPNs)

Okanagan College

- \$150,000 for LPN – orthopedics (development and pilot of LPN specialty training in B.C.)

Thompson Rivers University

- \$300,000 for two anesthesia assistant program cohorts
- \$500,000 for LPN to RN bridging program (allows mid-career LPNs to pursue a bachelor of science in nursing)
- \$395,000 for respiratory therapist fast-track and clinical refreshers for critical care settings (COVID-19 response)

Vancouver Community College

- \$750,000 to increase capacity in LPN to RN bridging program (allows mid-career LPNs to pursue a bachelor of science in nursing)

Contact:

Sean Leslie
Communications Director
Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and
Training
250 356-8485

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect