

NEWS RELEASE

February 19, 2014

BC Nurse Practitioner Association

BUDGET PUTS B.C NURSE PRACTITIONERS IN JEOPARDY

VANCOUVER—On February 18, 2014, the B.C. Government released its 2014 budget and associated Service Plans for each Ministry, unveiling a strategic plan that is highly focused on physicians and contains very few references to other important health care professions, including nurse practitioners.

“We are appalled and disheartened at this physician-centric approach to long-term planning,” said Stan Marchuk, President of the BC Nurse Practitioner Association (BCNPA). “Not only is this disrespectful, but it completely overlooks those we should always focus on when discussing any aspect of health care – our patients.”

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have additional education and nursing experience. They can diagnose and treat illnesses, order tests and prescribe medications. They are health care professionals who treat the whole person: addressing needs relating to their physical and mental health, gathering their medical history, focusing on how their illness affects their lives and their family, offering suggestions for people to lead a healthy life and teaching them how to manage chronic illness. Nurse practitioners are educators and researchers who can be consulted by other health-care team members.

In recent weeks Doctors of BC (formerly known as the BC Medical Association) has indicated that it supports nurse practitioner practice only when it is under the delegated authority of medicine. However, nurse practitioners are *autonomous*, highly-educated health care providers who are regulated by the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC). Despite this, and without consultation with nursing groups in British Columbia, government has indicated that it will now work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC (CPSBC) on issues related to expanding the nurse practitioner scope of practice.

“Doctors of BC has made it clear that expanding the access of British Columbians to primary care provided by nurse practitioners is not in their best interest,” said B.C. nurse leader Dr. Sally Thorne. “They use the ‘collaboration’ euphemism to imply that unless a profession is monitored and managed by physicians, this is a failure to collaborate, and they’ve been singing the praises of introducing physician assistants in B.C. – because physician assistants work for doctors and increase their billing.”

In the coming weeks, BCNPA and the Association of Registered Nurses of BC will call on all nurse practitioners, registered nurses, other health professionals, the public and elected members of the legislature, to express their disappointment and frustration with these decisions, and join us in calling for full engagement of all professions in policy discussions that determine their practice and their capacity to serve patients.

“Our healthcare system, and the existence of nurse practitioners, is in jeopardy, because government refuses to listen to anyone but self-interested physician groups,” said Marchuk. “Government needs to step up and take responsibility for the barriers they’ve created to nurse practitioner implementation, and work with the nursing community to develop reasonable solutions that are in the best interests of patients and taxpayers. It would be irresponsible to introduce yet another profession when they cannot stand up to organized medicine and demonstrate success with nurse practitioners.”

Visit www.bcnpa.org to anonymously share your stories, outrage or interest in ensuring the future of nurse practitioners in British Columbia.

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