

Budget 2027 Consultation Submission

June 19, 2026

Introduction

Doctors of BC is a voluntary association and the official voice of the medical profession in British Columbia, representing more than 18,000 physicians. Our mission is to support doctors as leaders in delivering and improving patient care. We negotiate the Physician Main Agreement with government and work with the Ministry of Health and health authorities on initiatives to strengthen BC's health system. Our vision is for doctors to make a difference through quality, patient-centred, culturally safe care, trusted leadership in system transformation, and meaningful professional satisfaction.

Based on extensive member engagement, research, and provincial data, this submission puts forward recommendations that address urgent health system priorities:

- 1) **Prioritize health system capacity** - British Columbia needs to prioritize health system capacity to deliver care at the level the population needs. This includes much needed funding for capital infrastructure and appropriate health human resources.
- 2) **Specialist wait times** – British Columbia needs to implement the Specialist Waitlist Management Proposal and develop a centralized database to support data collection, along with additional waitlist management mechanisms to address the 1.2 million residents waiting for health care.
- 3) **Improve urgent rural medical transport** – British Columbia needs to establish specific supports to improve urgent medical transport for patients living in rural areas.

These recommendations directly align with Budget 2026's priorities and advance solutions to safeguard critical health care services.

Recommendation 1 – Prioritize health system capacity

British Columbia needs to prioritize health system capacity to deliver care at the level the population needs. This includes prioritizing funding for capital infrastructure and appropriate health human resources.

Explanation

- BC's health care infrastructure is under severe strain. The province faces an unprecedented shortage of long-term care beds and ongoing, intermittent emergency department (ED) closures, among other concerns, in the context of a serious health human resource (HHR) crisis, which is deeply impacting medical care.
- ED overcrowding has become a significant concern for patient safety and quality of care in BC. This is because many acute care beds are used by patients who require an alternative level of care that they cannot access due to a shortage of community resources – such as long-term care.¹
- Doctors of BC has long advocated for providing the necessary infrastructure to ensure patients have reasonable and timely access to acute care services, including a greater supply of functional acute care beds.² While there are notable examples of new and/or expanded construction, BC needs sufficient capacity given its population and demographics.
- In 2026, the BC Government cancelled contracts for five major health-care infrastructure projects, citing its deficit. These include the redevelopment of the Burnaby Hospital and long-term care facilities in Delta, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Kelowna.³ Regrettably, the need for these facilities (particularly long-term care beds) has not dissipated, and delays simply mean patients end up elsewhere, such as emergency departments or hospital hallways.
- Health workforce shortages significantly impact access to care and are a leading contributor to long wait times. These shortages result in overworked health care professionals, impact care quality, limit hospital capacity, and increase hospital overcrowding. A comprehensive approach to managing the health workforce is required to ensure that patients have timely access to care. This may mean expanding current efforts in recruitment and retention, given BC's growing seniors population and the high number of physicians who will be retiring over the next decade.

¹ [DoBC Policy Statement: Emergency Department Overcrowding.](#)

² [DoBC Policy Statement: Improving Access to Acute Care Services](#)

³ [More money for health care in B.C. budget, but long-term care projects face delays](#)

Recommendation 2 – Specialist wait times

British Columbia needs to implement the *Specialist Waitlist Management Proposal* and develop a centralized database to support data collection, along with additional waitlist management mechanisms to address the 1.2 million residents waiting for health care.

Explanation

- Patients in BC are experiencing prolonged specialist wait times across the health care system. Data from the 2024 and 2025 Specialist Waitlist Survey conducted by Doctors of BC and the Consultant Specialists of BC highlight how rising demands for care and health system challenges, including a lack of system supports to manage increasing waitlists, are negatively impacting patients and contributing to physician moral distress and burnout.
- There are roughly [1.2 million patients](#) in BC waiting for consultation appointments with a specialist. This does not capture additional wait times for diagnostic procedures, treatments, and surgeries.
- The waitlist crisis is growing and unsustainable. The longer patients wait, the greater impact on their health, and cost to the health care system.
- Doctors of BC recommends that the Ministry of Health support and fund the *Specialist Waitlist Management Proposal*. This proposal, developed over a two-year collaborative process between Consultant Specialists of BC, Doctors of BC, and the Ministry of Health and based on significant engagement with specialists, outlines the need for improved data collection and waitlist management tools.
- Specifically, the proposal puts forward two complementary solutions to address waitlists: building appropriate, reliable infrastructure to centralize province-wide waitlists through a Specialist Waitlist Database and implementing waitlist management mechanisms to help Specialists immediately reduce their waitlists.⁴
- Data-driven, evidence-based solutions developed with input from physicians and other health professionals are needed to sustainably reduce wait times, lower costs, and improve patient outcomes.
- The Specialist Waitlist Management Proposal offers the BC government an opportunity to significantly improve health care wait times and access to care, while enhancing the quality and efficiency of the health system.

⁴ [Improving access to specialist care in BC: A proposal for waitlist reduction and system renewal.](#)

Recommendation 3 – Improve urgent rural medical transport

British Columbia needs to establish specific supports to improve urgent medical transport for patients living in rural areas.

Explanation

- A gap in care continues to exist between BC residents living in rural areas and those living in urban centres. Rural BC residents face a tenfold higher risk of death following trauma than their urban counterparts⁵, despite the BC Ministry of Health's 2015 Health Policy Papers recognizing the need to improve emergency response capacity and ensure timely, quality pre-hospital care in rural and remote communities.
- This issue exacerbates the longstanding challenges around access to health care in rural communities. Physicians or nurses are required to escort urgent rural medical transfers, resulting in significant staffing impacts and gaps in care for emergency departments in rural communities, and contributing to closures.
- Moral distress related to arranging patient medical transport has been identified as a key factor in retaining health care professionals in rural areas.⁶ Supporting rural medical patient transport will help advance recruitment and retention efforts in rural communities.⁷
- BC needs to consider diverse service options to ensure rural patients are not left behind. These include investing in rural-based air transfer infrastructure (heliports and airports). Including additional funding for local response teams (e.g. Hope Air, Interior Health's High Acuity Response Team, local provider up-skilling, etc.) as well as innovations that can supplement the existing and strained structure.

Conclusion

Strategic investments in health system capacity, specialist access, and urgent rural medical transportation represent an opportunity to address these challenges while advancing the Province's commitments to improving access, equity, and health outcomes.

As the Province considers its priorities for Budget 2027, we encourage targeted investments in these areas to help ensure a more responsive, sustainable and patient-centred health system. We look forward to continued collaboration to identify practical solutions to the above-mentioned issues, thereby improving patient access to care and delivering meaningful benefits to patients and communities throughout BC.

⁵ Provincial Health Services Authority. (2021). *BC Trauma System data summary report: 2020/2021 fiscal year*. Trauma Services BC.

⁶ [Medical transport in rural Canada. Society of Rural Physicians of Canada.](#)

⁷ [Rural patient transport and transfer findings from a realist review.](#)