

British Columbia News

Province more than doubles specialty nursing seats

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/21341>

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Burnaby - The provincial government is more than doubling the number of specialty nurse training opportunities in the province by funding 1,000 seats each year at the British Columbia School of Technology (BCIT).

This increase will help meet growing demand for care throughout British Columbia. Specialty nurses work in high-skill areas ranging from emergency settings to intensive care units for high-risk cardiac care patients, to delivering babies and providing newborn care, to working with complex patients with multiple health challenges.

“Specialty nurses help us when we need emergency care; they help deliver our babies and they care for us when we are seriously ill,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “Increasing the number of specialty nurse seats helps people get trained for some of the most important and in-demand jobs in B.C. That is why we created more training opportunities for nurses – so they have the tools they need to be there for British Columbians when we need them most.”

BCIT’s specialty nursing training program is one of Canada’s most comprehensive, providing nurses advanced hands-on training for work in hospital and community settings.

“BCIT offers a balanced education of theory and hands-on experience for its nursing students to be job-ready. I am surrounded by a small cohort of classmates and passionate instructors who are supportive and empowering,” said Christina Dixon, BCIT nursing student, school of health sciences. “It feels like a community and team, making a strong parallel to the clinical setting. As an Indigenous nursing student, I am honoured and prepared to make a long-term difference, while creating a culturally safe and supportive environment for patients from all backgrounds.”

Starting in 2018-19, the Province added 611 training seats to the previous 389 seat baseline for a total of 1,000 seats. The Province is providing funding at that level for 2019-20 and 2020-21 and will continue to provide support going forward to help ensure B.C.’s health-care workforce is ready to meet patient needs.

“Caring for B.C.’s growing and aging population is a priority for this government, which is why we’re investing in specialty nursing programs so students can train for high-demand careers that are critical for modern health care in our province,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. “We are expanding nursing and health-care programs across the province including in the North, the Northeast and on Vancouver Island because we understand British Columbians need and deserve top-quality health care.”

Nursing is one of the fastest-growing job sectors in the province, due to a growing and aging population. Approximately 60% of B.C.’s nurses work in complex or acute settings in health authorities – up from 44% four years ago. The demand for specialty nurses, such as perinatal, emergency and critical care, is increasing throughout the province.

“This funding will give more nurses the professional development they need to accelerate their careers and to apply for leadership, teaching and community health positions,” said Jacqollyne

Keath, board chair, Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia. “Specialty nursing is a rewarding and in demand career with positions available around the province.”

Doubling the number of specialty nurse seats is part of ongoing efforts from the ministries of Health and Advanced Education, Skills and Training to ensure the number, type and location of health-care training opportunities meet B.C.’s patient and population needs.

“With one of the most comprehensive specialty nursing programs in Canada, BCIT is proud to support the thousands of nurses that are a cornerstone of the B.C. health-care system,” said Kathy Kinloch, president, BCIT. “This investment from the provincial government enables BCIT to expand quality specialty nursing training that directly supports B.C.’s health-care sector.”

The ministries of Health and Advanced Education, Skills and Training work closely with health authorities and other partners to align the number, type and location of health-care workers to meet patient and population needs.

“On behalf of nurses around this province, the BC Nurses’ Union welcomes this significant investment in specialty education,” said Christine Sorensen, president, British Columbia Nurse’s Union. “Today’s announcement is a promising step toward addressing the province’s nurse shortage and the impact it’s having on patient care. We look forward to continuing to work with government and all stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive health human resources plan is in place to manage this complex issue.”

This increase supports additional actions by the government to ensure expanded nursing education opportunities in B.C. In June 2019, the first nursing degree program in the Northeast was announced. The University of Northern British Columbia’s program is a five-semester, two-year bachelor of science in nursing program, which will support 32 students at full capacity. The first class of 16 student spaces, to be operated out of Northern Lights College in Fort St. John, is expected to be up and running this fall.

Learn More:

For more information on the specialty nursing program at BCIT, visit:
<https://www.bcit.ca/study/programs/specialtynursing>

Nursing degree program coming to the Northeast:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019AEST0070-001195>

Creating new opportunities for nurse practitioners as part of team-based care system:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018HLTH0034-000995>

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