

VANCOUVER, BC – June 17, 2016:

British Columbia's Minister of Health, Terry Lake, and Minister of Children and Family Development, Stephanie Cadieux, jointly announced today a \$3 million donation to the InnerChange Foundation that will kick start an unprecedented partnership between the InnerChange Foundation, the Graham Boeckh Foundation and St. Paul's Hospital Foundation, representing a broad coalition of individual and corporate donors. Each of the partners has committed to provide an initial contribution of \$1.5 million. The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research has also agreed to make an \$800,000 research and evaluation contribution. This partnership will fundamentally change how vulnerable and at risk young British Columbians, including youth suffering from addiction issues, receive integrated health care and related services.

Today's announcement marks the launch of a groundbreaking initiative that is expected to revolutionize the delivery of mental health and addiction services for young British Columbians. The BC Integrated Youth Services Initiative will develop five new service centres providing much-needed multi-disciplinary primary health, psychiatric, psychological, addiction, social, vocational and other services for youth between the ages of 12 and 24 years old. The availability, breadth and scope of such services in an integrated format is unprecedented in Canada. Teams of highly skilled professionals will now collaborate, all-under-one-roof, to address the needs of young individuals suffering from complex addiction and mental health challenges. The BC-IYSI is a progressive approach that aims to address critical youth health care issues before they escalate into chronic adult illnesses. This approach focuses on multi-faceted early intervention and prevention.

Today's announcement by Minister Lake and Minister Cadieux is the green light for the establishment of one new youth service centre in each of BC five regional health authority districts (see <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016HLTH0053-001061>). These five centres, or youth-friendly integrated health and social service "hubs", will fill gaps in our existing healthcare system where children and youth aged 12 to 24 currently fall through the cracks – particularly those most at risk of mental illness and substance misuse. Each new hub is expected to have at least 6000 visits per year. A second phase of youth hub deployment is targeted within a few years and may see many more hubs opened across BC, along with innovative online services that will reach out to remote BC communities and that will lower the access threshold for many other underserved young British Columbians.

"Addiction is a complex challenge that can profoundly harm individuals, families, communities and businesses across every segment of BC society, and it needs innovative solutions." said Dr. Laura Tate, Executive Director of InnerChange. "BC-IYSI is a very promising step in the right direction. I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of individual and business community donors who have joined us to deliver pragmatic solutions to this problem. Together, we value the chance we now have to profoundly change the status quo and to deliver quality services to struggling young people before their challenges become more deeply entrenched. "

“This is a game changer. Helping youth now is the right investment at the right time,” added Marco Romero, chair of InnerChange. “We know that 75% of adults with chronic mental health and substance use challenges began having those difficulties before their 25th birthday, often much earlier. All of our partners supporting the BC-IYSI are united in their belief that we will prevent major health care and other costs for British Columbia by investing early in our youth, before problems compound. Ultimately, we all want to stem the adverse impacts of addiction and related health challenges on our society”.

The InnerChange Foundation provides leadership, funding and advocacy to drive innovation and change. Our goal is to improve the health outcomes for British Columbians suffering from addictions and related mental health challenges. Beyond our contribution to BC-IYSA, InnerChange is also working on other innovative ways to support people from addiction and concurrent disorders.

For more information about InnerChange and the BC-IYSI or to get involved directly in our work, visit our website at: www.innerchangefoundation.org. Please consider supporting InnerChange one way or another. 100% of donations earmarked for the BC-IYSI will go directly to the project.

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