

For Immediate Release

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND REPORT REVEALS 1 IN 3 WOMEN DO NOT FEEL THEIR HEALTHCARE NEEDS ARE BEING MET

In Her Words: BC report findings demand an urgent policy shift in BC's healthcare system to better meet the unique needs of women

VANCOUVER, BC, October 10, 2019 – *In Her Words: Women's experience with the healthcare system in BC* was released today by BC Women's Health Foundation (BCWHF) in partnership with Pacific Blue Cross (PBC), revealing the gender inequities that exist in the BC healthcare system. The findings call on government, businesses and non-profits to collaborate to enhance women's access to and experience with the healthcare system in BC.

Key findings from report:

- One third of the women surveyed do not feel their needs are being met or treated effectively by the current healthcare system. For Indigenous women, it was nearly three quarters of respondents.
- Just over half of surveyed women felt that a physician had diminished or overlooked their symptoms.
- Three in ten women reported challenges accessing the healthcare they needed last year.

Women account for half the population and benefit our families, communities, businesses and the broader economy. Yet despite decades of dramatic progress and development in health research, practice and policy, the report illustrates the system is still not balanced and there is important work to be done to remove barriers and close the gender gap in healthcare.

"The findings of this report indicate the need for transformational change in the BC healthcare sector to improve access to equitable healthcare for women," says **Genesa Greening, President & Chief Executive Officer, BCWHF**. "At BCWHF, we are committed to working with our partners at BC Women's Hospital and the Women's Health Research Institute to enhance their commitment to improve the health of women in our province, and beyond.

In June 2019, BCWHF expanded its mandate to address the full spectrum of women's health. Part of this expanded scope includes commissioning reports like *In Her Words*, and increasing funding towards solutions-focused research and innovation at the Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI), to ensure women and their health needs are validated.

PBC entered into a three-year commitment with BCWHF to find solutions to improve women's experience with healthcare. With this report, PBC will reflect on and enhance healthcare insurance plan design with the goal to improve health outcomes for women across the province. Investing in the health of women through the workplace is important, and businesses are encouraged to ensure workplace

benefits account for the unique needs of women, working to reduce absenteeism, improve overall engagement, and recruit and retain top talent over the long-term.

“As a Health Benefits Society, our mission is to improve health and wellbeing for all British Columbians,” says **John Crawford, President and CEO, Pacific Blue Cross**. “We are excited to release *In Her Words: Women’s experience with the healthcare system in BC* with BCWHF. Together with BCWHF, we are working to address health inequities by enabling women of all ages and life stages with access to the highest quality healthcare.”

The innovative three-year partnership between BCWHF and PBC, and the findings from the report, should serve as a catalyst for change. Together with government, businesses and not-for-profit organizations, there is a substantial opportunity to make and encourage evidence-based decisions to improve the ways that women interact with the healthcare system.

About *In Her Words: Women’s experience with the healthcare system in BC*

BC Women’s Health Foundation (BCWHF) and Pacific Blue Cross (PBC) spearheaded *In Her Words: Women’s experience with the healthcare system in BC* to hear directly from women about their experiences with the healthcare system in BC. The report is one of the first-of-its-kind in Canada and was produced following a provincially representative survey, including focus groups and consultations, to hear from women across the province, in both urban hubs and rural communities.

About BC Women’s Health Foundation (BCWHF)

BC Women’s Health Foundation is dedicated to advancing the full spectrum of women’s health in BC so that all women, across all life stages, have equitable access to the highest quality healthcare when, where and how they need it. To find out more about our bold and dynamic vision of healthy women everywhere, capable of anything, visit bcwomensfoundation.org.

About Pacific Blue Cross

[Pacific Blue Cross](http://PacificBlueCross.com) is a Health Benefits Society and British Columbia’s number one health benefits provider. Based in Burnaby, BC, the not-for-profit organization provides health, dental, life, disability and travel coverage for 1 in 3 British Columbians through group benefits and individual plans. As part of its mission to improve health and wellbeing in BC, Pacific Blue Cross proactively supports charitable organizations across the province working to improve health outcomes.

-30-

To arrange an interview or for more information about the report, please contact:

Danielle Bronson, Account Manager, Corporate Communications, Edelman

604-648-3438 | Danielle.Bronson@edelman.com