

B.C. Nurses Union Questionnaire

B.C. Green Party response

Build a true culture of safety in health care

BC's nurses are at greater risk of injury from workplace violence than law enforcement and security workers. Do you support investing in violence prevention to keep nurses safe? Will you support an amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada to make violence against nurses an "aggravating circumstance?"

We recognize that nurses should not face a significant risk of injury from violence in their place of work. We will work in collaboration with the BCNU in order to ensure that nurses are safe. Investing in violence prevention and amending the Criminal Code are two strategies to achieve this end that we will consider as government.

Educate, hire and retain enough nurses for safe patient care

BC's health authorities haven't been educating or hiring enough nurses to ensure people get safe, timely care, resulting in hallway medicine and gridlocked emergency rooms. Do you support investing enough to ensure an adequate supply of nurses, including specialty-educated nurses, so that British Columbians receive safe, timely patient care in our urban and rural communities?

Yes, we will allocate \$100 million for the expansion of support for interprofessional, integrated primary care to be provided by physiotherapists, nurse practitioners, midwives, dieticians and other health professionals. This investment will expand people's access to care, reduce wait times, reduce the need for people to see a general practitioner and potentially avert the need for surgery.

Invest in seniors' care to support aging with dignity

Nine out of ten BC care homes lack the staff needed to provide the minimum 3.36 direct care hours per day. Do you support funding 100% of residential care homes to deliver safe, quality care, so that vulnerable seniors in care are no longer over-medicated and under-mobilized?

We will act to ensure that care homes are adequately staffed and resourced, and that seniors receive the care they need and deserve, enabling them to age with dignity. A B.C. Green Government will act to ensure the staffing of public and private care homes meets government guidelines, and will provide an additional \$200 million over four years to address staffing levels

in public facilities.

We will collaborate with Health Authorities and the BC Care Providers Association to ensure that clear, measurable and enforceable staffing standards for residential care facilities are implemented. Standards will be supported by monitoring and enforcement to ensure they are being met.

Advocate for health and social justice

Over 163,000 children in BC live in poverty that directly affects their health and life chances. Will you address social determinants of health and work to reduce poverty, raise minimum wages, provide affordable childcare and safe housing, and improve income and social supports for vulnerable citizens?

Yes, our core philosophy holds that the purpose of government is to facilitate the highest and best outcomes for the health and wellbeing of current and future generations of British Columbians. We will address the social determinants of health through a variety of measures. Our current levels of poverty and child poverty are unacceptable in a province as wealthy as B.C. Reducing poverty is one of our central priorities and we will act on this issue immediately upon forming Government, through a multi-faceted strategy that addresses minimum wage, affordable childcare and safe housing, and income and social supports.

A B.C. Green government will implement a poverty reduction strategy in consultation with advocacy groups. We will also provide youth ages 18-24 transitioning out of foster care with a basic income support between \$15,000-\$20,000 per year.

We support transitioning to liveable incomes for all British Columbians and will significantly raise social assistance rates as a first step toward this goal. We will increase all rates by 50% by April 2020. We will also create a fair wages commission to oversee increases to the minimum wage in order to combat rising levels of working poverty while protecting marginal jobs.

In addition to raising social assistance rates, we will design a basic income pilot project that will test its ability to reduce poverty, and improve health, housing and employment outcomes. We believe that basic income has the potential help us alleviate poverty and foster healthier families and more resilient communities. It could reduce the stigma and complexity of our current social assistance system, and provide people enough income security that they are able to escape the poverty trap and take care of their families.

A B.C. Green government will introduce a comprehensive housing strategy that recognizes that the primary purpose of housing must be to provide homes first, and a means of investment second. We believe that every person has a right to reasonable accommodation and will enact

policies to make this a reality. We will invest heavily in affordable housing and rental housing and give breaks to those who are struggling to afford reasonable accommodation. A B.C. Green government will invest up to \$750 million per year in to support the construction of approximately 4,000 new units of affordable housing per year, alongside other initiatives to increase the provision of affordable housing.

We will also make historic investments in early childhood education, to support:

- Up to 25 hours free early childhood education per week for three and four year olds;
- Free daycare for working parents with children under three;
- Up to \$500 per month for families with children under three and a stay at home parent.

This plan will result in economic and social benefits for parents, and in particular women, from being able to more easily re-enter the workforce. It will re-establish government responsibility to adequately educate children, combat child poverty and help children overcome educational disadvantages.

Provide affordable, accessible health care for all

Only BC collects MSP premiums for health care. This tax kicks in at just \$24,001 of income, reaching the maximum \$1,800 a year for families earning \$42,001 – the same amount a family earning \$420,000 a year pays. Do you support eliminating MSP premiums as regressive taxation that falls hardest on those least able to pay, so health care is affordable and accessible to all?

Yes, a B.C. Green Government will eliminate MSP premiums. MSP premiums unfairly burden low and fixed income British Columbians with a heavy flat tax. A B.C. Green Government will roll Medical Service Plan (MSP) premiums into the payroll tax and personal income tax to ensure that our healthcare system is funded in an equitable and progressive manner.

Improve mental health services

Mental health issues afflict one in five, many of whom receive no services and may wind up homeless or in prison with addictions. Do you support investing in mental health services in order to provide this needed care to people in their own communities?

Yes, we absolutely support investing in mental health services and providing better supports to people in need of help. We will establish a Ministry responsible for mental health and addictions, which will be responsible for developing and implementing a Mental Health and Addiction Strategy based on the recommendations of the auditor general, and a Youth Mental Health Strategy for early detection of mental health illness.

Early intervention can improve quality of life and provide significant cost savings. Empowering youth, educators, and health professionals with a better understanding of mental health can help alleviate the social and economic impact of some mental health problems.

We will allocate \$80 million to fund early intervention, youth mental health initiatives, supervised injections sites, and community-based centres for mental health and rehabilitation. We will also implement an integrated primary care model specific to youth and mental health so that patients and their families can easily navigate resources in a supportive environment, and support innovative community-based options for responding to the needs of young people with mental illness and their families such as the Clubhouse International model.

Expand fentanyl crisis response

922 people died from overdoses in 2016, 60% fentanyl-related. Many thousands more were saved by first responders and frontline nurses. Do you support immediate investment in more harm reduction capacity, publicly provided detox and rehabilitation services, and better backup and relief for frontline health care workers?

Yes, a B.C. Green Government will take decisive action on the fentanyl crisis. The fentanyl crisis has highlighted the inadequacy of our addiction services, and our lack of safe injection sites and naloxone training. We will develop an immediate response to the fentanyl crisis based on successful programs in Europe that invest in treatment on demand, drug substitution, early-warning monitoring systems, and coordinated response. We will also work in collaboration with frontline healthcare workers to ensure they have the necessary supports to protect their mental health.