



RE: BC Nurses Union Provincial Election Survey

Thank you for your 2017 provincial election questionnaire.

Please accept the response below on behalf of all BC New Democrat candidates in the 2017 provincial election.

In addition to our detailed answers in the survey below, John Horgan and the BC NDP will take further action to make our healthcare system work for British Columbians. We will make improving access to medical professionals the top priority for our Ministry of Health.

We'll develop a new urgent care model that gets emergency room visitors the healthcare support they need faster, and we'll help rural British Columbians with an improved medical travel allowance.

At the same time, we will:

- Reduce the cost of prescription drugs.
- Invest in new hospitals and care facilities in communities across BC, plus home care and quality long-term care for BC seniors.
- Establish Urgent Family Care Centres across BC (open evenings and weekends), to help you get the one-on-one healthcare you need with the support of a full medical team.
- Invest in more paramedics, so that no one is left waiting for an ambulance in their time of critical need.
- Implement province-wide coordination to manage and actively monitor waitlists and speed up service delivery.
- Stop the decline in rural health services.
- Fund UBC's Therapeutics Initiative properly to keep drug costs down and patients safe.
- Work with the federal government to create a national pharmacare program and bulk purchasing of medication to keep costs low.



- Remove the age restriction on the insulin pump program for British Columbians living with diabetes.

For more information on our platform, please visit www.bcndp.ca/platform

Thank you.

1. 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?"

A. Yes. NDP candidates across the province are signing the pledge to keep nurses safe at work. Changes to sentencing provisions under the Criminal Code ultimately will require federal government action. On this note, a BC NDP government will take comprehensive, robust action within areas of provincial jurisdiction, including:

- fully enforcing sections of the Occupational Health and Safety regulation targeting violence in the workplace (Sections 4.27 – 4.31) and violence prevention provisions under the latest collective agreement;
- establishing a provincial alerting system;
- ensuring safe staffing levels.

2. 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?

A. Our platform makes significant investments in advanced education that will help support individuals pursuing careers in specialized health professions, including:

- capping tuition;
- eliminating interest on student loans;
- providing a \$1000 completion grant to help graduates pay down debt;
- establishing a graduate program scholarship fund.



Our strategic investments in health care include establishing multi-disciplinary Urgent Family Care Centres to expand access to safe, timely patient care in urban and rural regions. These province wide - team based primary care clinics, open seven days a week and into the evenings, will help relieve pressure on acute care ERs and beds. Nurses will be recruited to play integral roles in these centres. Furthermore, we will work with you and the health authorities towards continued strategic investments in specialized nursing training spots as part of a long term plan addressing shortages in specialized nurses.

3. 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?

A. We will ensure that every publicly funded facility meets care standards (unlike the BC Liberals, who say they will meet the standard across a health region). To ensure staffing and care standards are met, we intend to increase support for residential care and require accountability from publicly funded providers. We will also conduct a systemic review going forward to establish updated, sufficient staffing and care standards.

The NDP will also make investments to increase the length and scope of home support visits to help seniors stay at home, rather than enter residential care.

4. 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?

A. Yes. If it forms government, the NDP will:

- prepare and implement a poverty reduction plan for BC;
- increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour;
- implement a \$10 a day child care program;
- as part of our comprehensive housing affordability strategy provide a \$400/year renters grant, and construct 114,000 new rental, co-op and social housing units;
- immediately raise all income assistance and disability rates by \$100 per month, and support assistance recipients as they re-enter the workforce by allowing them to keep an additional \$200 a month in earnings exemptions;
- end Christy Clark's disability bus pass clawback;
- increase funding for Agreements with Young Adults so all youth aging out of care who need



support receive it.

5. 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?

A. Yes. We will go ahead with the 2017 Budget's 50 per cent reduction and completely eliminate the fee within four years, saving families as much as \$1,800 a year.

6. 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?

A. Yes. A NDP government will designate a Minister for Mental Health and Addictions to transform and expand the mental health and substance use system to provide early intervention and prevention services, and to realize an “ask once, get help fast” model of care delivery so people in crisis no longer wait for months for help.

We intend to establish province wide, in urban and rural areas, multidisciplinary Urgent Family Care Centres. Open seven days a week and in the evenings, these centres will provide, inter alia, community based mental health services. To provide early intervention, and help in real time, we will ensure students can access specially trained adolescent mental health professionals within the school system.

7. 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?

A. Yes. The growing overdose fatality count reflects the lack of MHSU services in our public healthcare system 7 years into the Liberals' 10 year mental health plan. As a consequence, addictions treatment has become a form of two-tier health care. We are committed to providing addictions treatment in real time, by implementing an “ask once get help fast” model of care delivery. This will involve, inter alia, an expansion of evidence based regulated treatment services for addictions and concurrent disorders including more outpatient follow up care.



We also plan to increase harm reduction services, and supports for frontline care workers to protect them against burnout and the effects of trauma. Without these front line care workers, more lives will be put at risk and the overdose epidemic will deepen.