

## **1. What will your party do to relieve the financial hardship of travel for medical care?**

Under the BC Liberals, people in rural, remote and Indigenous communities were largely ignored when it came to health care services. Our rural collaborative framework is changing that, delivering more immediate and culturally safe care closer to home. People living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities have unique challenges in accessing the health care they need. The new collaborative framework we announced this past April outlines immediate actions to improve health-care services and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- improved medical transportation options to larger centres, including flight and ambulance;
- housing options for people looking to self-isolate near their families while remaining in their home communities;
- new and faster COVID-19 testing technology;
- culturally safe contact tracing that respects privacy in small communities;
- access to Virtual Doctor of the Day, a program that connects First Nations members and their families in remote communities to a doctor or nurse practitioner using videoconferencing;
- options for accommodation near larger centres with more medical services; and
- increased mental-health supports in communities.
- The Hospital at Home program we're launching as part of our COVID-19 fall preparedness plan is a blueprint for expanding e-health and tele-health services more broadly, so people can get virtual visits from doctors and nurses at home.

I'll also personally commit to fighting for more options for rural transit for our part of BC. We know this is a huge challenge to local service centers or more regional ones. Creative partnership between partners (e.g. IHA, BCTransit, Local Government) can help provide solutions for this problems.

## **2. What will your party do to increase specialist services in rural areas?**

The Hospital at Home program we're launching as part of our COVID-19 fall preparedness plan is a blueprint for expanding e-health and tele-health services more broadly, so people can get virtual visits from doctors and nurses - and specialists - at home.

I think the notion of brining the specialists to the patient is especially relevant in Rural BC, so hopefully there is also opportunity to advocate for increased availability of healthcare specialists in rural communities. Further opportunities to reduce the financial burden of travel for appointments should also be considered.

**3. What will your party do to provide family physicians in areas that have none?**

Since forming government in 2017, one of the top priorities for the NDP has been expanding primary care in communities across BC. In addition to the 21 Urgent and Primary Care Clinics opened or coming soon, ten more are on their way to deliver better and faster care in more communities, attach people to doctors, and help take the pressure off emergency rooms. We'll also expand Primary Care Networks that deliver more personalized and coordinated care – with different health care providers sharing information, data and opinions to ensure the best care possible. With many already in place, we'll bring this vital health care network to more BC communities.

We are also going to open B.C.'s second medical school, with a focus on public and population health, and primary care..

**4. If elected, what will your party do to ensure adequate financial and planning support is provided to rural communities expressing an interest in establishing a Community Health Centre?**

Since forming government in 2017, one of our top priorities has been expanding primary care in communities across BC. In addition to the 21 UPCCs opened or underway, our government also opened 3 CHCs operated by non-profits that focus on a specific population. Expanding primary care remains a top priority, and rural communities that are interested in establishing a CHC will find a willing partner in a re-elected BC NDP government.

**5. If elected, what will your party do to ensure continued funding for existing Community Health Centres?**

We know that the Community Health Centre model is effective in addressing the health care needs of vulnerable and hard to reach populations, including in rural areas. We look forward to continuing the conversation with the BCRHN, the BCACHC, and other partners to see how we can increase our support for new and existing CHCs in BC.

**6. If elected, how will physicians be paid in Community Health Centres?**

We know that one of the main challenges in recruiting more physicians into family practice is the out-dated fee-for-service payment system, where overhead and other costs are borne by the physician. One of the benefits of CHCs is that physicians can be paid through an alternate payment program. The Physician Master Agreement our government negotiated in 2019 supports a transition from fee-for-service compensation to new and other existing compensation models.

**7. What is your party's position on private, for-profit healthcare?**

BC New Democrats believe in a strong, well-funded, universal public healthcare system. The wealthy should not be able to jump the queue while everyone else waits longer. Unfortunately under the BC Liberals, this is what we began to see. While there is a place for private, for-profit healthcare - such as many private practices and clinics that offer uninsured services - it is critical that the integrity of our universal, public system is not undermined through extra billing, queue-jumping fees, or other practices.

**8. What is your party prepared to do to defend further challenges to Canada's public health care system?**

BC's Medicare Protection Act has not been adequately enforced for over a decade, resulting in private clinics extra-billing patients for insured services and putting our public system at risk. Unfortunately, our attempts to bring in more rigorous enforcement were stayed by the courts. We're reviewing the recent Cambie decision before we make any decisions around things like enforcement, but we're committed to defending our public health care system. We successfully defended our Medicare Protection Act at the Supreme Court of British Columbia, and we will do so again should Dr. Brian Day - or anyone else - seek to challenge our public healthcare system.

**9. What would you and your party do to improve long term care in BC?**

COVID-19 showed the cracks in long-term care caused by 16 years of BC Liberal neglect. We responded to the outbreaks by delivering stability for front-line workers and, in turn, better care for seniors. We'll make sure long-term care remains robust, well-funded, and able to quickly respond to a crisis. The BC Liberals fired and contracted out housekeeping and dietary hospital workers, and long-term care aides. We're putting an end to big multinational corporations cutting corners on your care by moving to bring those valuable workers back into the public service.

In addition to bringing back the long-term care jobs that were privatized by the BC Liberals, we're investing \$44 million to hire and train 7,000 new health care workers for long-term care homes and assisted living facilities. This Health Career Access Program will provide new opportunities for workers who lost their jobs in other sectors due to COVID-19. Keeping trained, qualified staff is critical for providing better care. We will develop a staffing retention strategy that provides workers in long-term care and assisted living with "levelled up wages" even after the pandemic ends, and restore provincial standards for wages, benefits, and working conditions that were cut by the BC Liberals.

The BC Liberals doled out hundreds of millions to for-profit corporations to create new care homes – and it failed miserably, with four of those care homes put under public administration for failing to provide required levels of care. We're working with non-profits to build public care homes that keep seniors safer, healthier and more comfortable. For-profit care home operators failed to deliver more than 200,000 hours of care they were paid by the public to provide. We're putting care before profit through new requirements that will make sure private operators are more transparent and accountable for the public funding they get.

**10. What is your party's position on P3s in healthcare?**

P3s were touted by the former BC Liberal government as a way to save taxpayer's money. However, the research shows that this is not the case. A re-elected BC NDP government will build publicly-funded health infrastructure, including hospitals and

clinics, and work with non-profits to build more seniors care homes. A profit motive should not be driving our healthcare decisions.

**11. As a candidate in the provincial election, what are you and your party prepared to do to address these barriers to mental health and addictions services in rural BC communities? (transportation and out-of-pocket costs, small town stigma, physical distancing)**

When BC NDP took office in 2017, mental health and addictions services in BC were woefully inadequate. That is why they created Canada's first Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, who has also issued a testimonial on my behalf. A Pathway to Hope, lays out our plan to help people now and improve the health and wellness of all British Columbians in the long term. We're taking a provincewide approach to build a system of care where services are always within reach and people have the supports and opportunities they need.

We're embedding mental health and substance use care in our Urgent Primary Care Centres and Primary Care Networks and opening more Foundry youth centres in rural communities like Burns Lake, Port Hardy and others. By putting primary care and mental health and substance use care under the same roof, we're helping break down barriers so that people can access care without stigma. We're investing in low and no-cost mental health and addictions counselling through organizations in every corner of the province, and have supported those services and Foundry youth centres to go virtual during COVID-19, further extending their reach.

A re-elected BC NDP government will invest in new e-health and other technologies, we can bring mental health care to more people in all regions of BC – reducing counselling costs for people in rural and remote communities, in particular, because access to care shouldn't depend on the size of your bank account.