

# 2024 BC Election Background Document with Questions

## Contents

*Click headings in table to jump to section*

Issue 1: Access to Health Care for Adults.....	1
Issue 2: Access to Health Care for Children and Youth.....	2
Issue 3: Mental Health.....	4
Issue 4: Income Security and Housing for Adults .....	6
Issue 5: Income Security for Families .....	8
Issue 6: Supports and Services for Children and Youth .....	10
Your Answers.....	12

## Issue 1: Access to Health Care for Adults

All people should have equitable access to quality health care to meet their primary, acute, and palliative care needs. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have unique, often more complex health needs and a greater presence of co-existing health issues than neuro-typical people. For example, [Baumbusch](#) shows that despite having a longer life expectancy than in previous generations, people with intellectual disabilities can have higher rates of co-morbidities than the general population. It has been the experience of some people that when they arrive at the hospital, the diagnosis of intellectual and developmental disabilities overshadows their acute health issue and can result in delayed treatment, inappropriate treatment, or even no treatment.

Community Living BC projects that this population group will double every 20 years. Despite knowing this and the co-existence of health issues, we continue to see a fragmented responsibility of health care services, a lack of coordination, and an erosion of nursing services through Health Services for Community Living and contracted nursing providers.

The lack of recognition and understanding of the unique health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by the health care community along with insufficient medical professionals with expertise in their health care has left them significantly marginalized.

### Questions:

- **1.1:** If elected, will you support the development, funding, and implementation of a health care strategy to adequately respond to the immediate and ongoing needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
- **1.2:** If elected, will you allocate annual targeted funds to strengthen the Health Services for Community Living program to ensure access to community nursing supports and to respond to ongoing population growth?
- **1.3:** If elected, will you establish an action plan with provincial targets to attract more medical specialists with expertise in health care related to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to all regions of the province?

## Issue 2: Access to Health Care for Children and Youth

Children and youth have a right to equitable access to quality health care to meet their needs. To realize this right, governments, funders, and health care providers must take all the right measures to provide health care and other disability-related support to improve their overall well-being and quality of life. The measures should provide coordination of care between health and other disability-related supports and the right accommodations for children and youth to fully participate in childcare, education, and all aspects of community life.

Despite legislated protections and government goals, little to no action, collaboration, or investment has been made to ensure health services are accessible for children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Children and youth in B.C. need and deserve a **pediatric health strategy** that includes:

- Timely, equitable, and adequate access to health care;
- Secured access to community primary health care providers and specialized services as needed;
- A family-centred model for accessing health care and support during transitions from birth to adulthood;
- Coordinated initiatives across ministries to support the navigation and coordination of health services; and
- Full access to specialized services and medical equipment to support their health care needs.

The Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres has created guidelines for the [management](#) of children with medical complexities through a continuum of care and for the [transition](#) from pediatric to adult care. Research has been done by the Kids Brain Health Network on [navigation support](#) to understand better its importance and the necessary collaboration to make it successful. Children and youth cannot wait longer for adequate access to health care.

## Questions:

- **2.1:** If elected, will you support a targeted investment for the development of a pediatric health strategy that utilizes existing recommended guidelines to equitably respond to the health needs of children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
- **2.2:** If elected, will you support the alignment of policy and practice with the recommended guidelines to ensure continuity of health care as youth transition to adulthood, including a person and family-centred approach to the transition that allows the necessary time to connect to the adult model of health care?
- **2.3:** If elected, will you commit to creating community-based care coordination and navigation support programs for families, including nurse navigators and health-based social workers, while also streamlining services into a system that is easier to navigate?

## Issue 3: Mental Health

Even though access to mental health is an issue for people across the province, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities face disproportionate rates of mental health challenges and are a population predicted to double in B.C. in the next 20 years.

Evidence shows that mental health challenges worsen as youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities transition to adulthood. Intersectionality also impacts mental health outcomes. Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and other equity-deserving groups experience greater mental health challenges due to disparities in social determinants of health and stressors like discrimination. To adequately meet the mental health needs of all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we need B.C.-specific data and research to inform service planning.

Mainstream mental health services often exclude people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health challenges. This group is particularly vulnerable to the impact of mental health and has highly specialized needs. Yet, there is a scarcity of professionals with expertise and a lack of specialized services throughout B.C. This results in long wait times, inadequate care, loss of supports, hospitalizations, and otherwise preventable crises occurring in people's lives. An intellectual disability should not be a barrier to accessing mental health support.

## Questions

- **3.1:** If elected, will you support the development and funding of a mental health strategy that is inclusive, equitable, intersectional, robust, and culturally safe to respond to the mental health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the lifespan; offering diverse and holistic options on a continuum of care and coordinated across systems?
- **3.2:** If elected, will you commit to setting targeted funds in the provincial budget with accountability measures in place, to increase regional capacity to address the mental health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by:
  - Ensuring that mainstream mental health services (including Foundry) become inclusive of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
  - Reducing wait times for specialized services, like the regional Developmental Disabilities Mental Health services, and enhancing their capacity to support youth during their transition to adulthood.
  - Addressing the lack of professionals with expertise in intellectual and developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health challenges by creating a strategy for training, recruiting, and attracting specialists across the continuum of care.
  - Enhancing prevention and assessment, in alignment with the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Roadmap](#), to adequately support people's mental health needs?

## Issue 4: Income Security and Housing for Adults

Income security is key for maintaining a good quality of life, allowing people to live safely, independently, and with dignity. Yet, many adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in B.C. live in poverty due to insufficient financial support. To address income security for this group, affordability must be defined in a way that accounts for people living in poverty and includes the additional costs associated with living with a disability. Too many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities do not have access to the same opportunities or housing choices that others have in their community.

Adults receiving provincial Person with Disability (PWD) benefits live well below the poverty line and face disparities in housing, health care, and relationship status. The current average monthly benefit rate for a single adult is \$1,483.50. This amount does not provide people with access to the housing market. It falls \$766.50 below the poverty line, according to Statistics Canada's market basket measure for 2022, which does not account for the continued rising cost of living in B.C. We assert that a liveable income in the province is \$2,400.00 per month. By individualizing the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), Canada recognized that dual-income households help people meet their needs. PWD recipients, however, are penalized for living with loved ones by having their assistance reduced or removed. People are also subjected to the clawback of income administered through other provincial and federal benefits they are eligible for.

The Canada Disability Benefit provides an opportunity to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Budget 2024 and the proposed Canada Disability Benefit Regulations state that access to this critical benefit is contingent on having a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate. With significant barriers to obtaining the Disability Tax Credit certificate, such as the shortage of health care providers, using it as the entry point to benefits that help assure income security is problematic.

### Questions

- **4.1:** If elected, will you ensure key changes are made to the provincial Persons with Disabilities (PWD) program to help lift people out of poverty, including:
  - Rates that guarantee a liveable income and are indexed to inflation, beginning at \$2,400 a month.

- Individualized Benefits (attached to the person, not the household).
- The allowance of combined and stackable provincial and federal benefits, without clawbacks.
- Increase the health supplement benefit to provide needed access to pharmaceuticals, vision care, and equipment to support disability-related needs?
- **4.2:** If elected, will you engage stakeholders to establish an inclusive definition of affordable housing?
- **4.3:** If elected, will you take immediate action to work with the federal government to facilitate access to the Disability Tax Credit and the Canada Disability Benefit by establishing an application process that automatically approves people who have applied for and are eligible to receive provincial benefits?
- **4.4:** If elected, will you increase the supply and availability of housing options to meet existing and emerging needs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by
  - Expanding the mix of housing options available across affordability thresholds.
  - Addressing the current affordability gap within each municipality across B.C.
  - Increasing the number of portable rental supplements targeted for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
- **4.5:** If elected, will you adopt an inclusive housing standard to respond to gaps in the current housing crisis with community-based targeted strategies? Specifically, for people in extreme housing need, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are at a higher risk of housing insecurity.



## Issue 5: Income Security for Families

One in seven children in B.C. were living in poverty in 2021, with child poverty rates expected to continue increasing. Caring for a child with disabilities increases the likelihood that a family will live in poverty. Multiple factors impact income security for families with children who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. One of the most critical factors is whether they have access to inclusive childcare, including before and after-school care. According to the [2023 BC Child Poverty Report Card](#), children with disabilities are turned away from childcare programs, which often lack the capacity to support them. Without childcare that is affordable and inclusive, families are prevented from joining the workforce. Recent efforts by the government have focussed on reducing childcare costs and creating more inclusive spaces; however, families continue to face long wait lists and lack childcare support within their communities. B.C.'s [2024 Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) acknowledges that high-quality, accessible, inclusive, and affordable child care is a key factor in reducing poverty, by allowing parents and caregivers to access employment, schooling, and training opportunities.

There are high costs associated with caring for a loved one with disabilities. Caretaking often extends across the lifespan, compromising financial stability and making it challenging to exit poverty. Financial supports are required to ensure needs are met regarding home and vehicle adaptations, specialized health, dental, and vision care, and other disability-related supports and equipment. Supports and benefits need to be coordinated across ministries, stackable with other benefits, and not subjected to clawbacks.

## Questions

- **5.1:** If elected, will you engage with stakeholders to create targeted poverty reduction measures specific to childhood disability that ensure policies and programs are in place and coordinated across all ministries to support the needs of families?
- **5.2:** If elected, will you ensure that through federal and provincial funds, families with children with disabilities have equitable access to inclusive child care supports in their community, including age-appropriate and well-supported before and after school care, to reduce the barriers that parents/caregivers face to join the workforce?
- **5.3:** Financial supports are required to ensure needs are met regarding access to high-quality, equitable, and accessible health care, housing, transportation, and disability-related services. If elected, will you ensure these measures toward income security for families are put in place and are stackable with other benefits, without clawbacks?

## Issue 6: Supports and Services for Children and Youth

All children and youth must have equitable access to a full range of programs and community services to support their well-being and quality of life as they grow. Children and youth with disabilities in B.C., their families, and communities need immediate funding for supports and services. Currently, children and youth are funded until the age of nineteen, but families face ongoing gaps in support while transitioning to adulthood. Expanding access to supports and services to the age of twenty-five would allow children and youth to develop at an individualized rate.

There is a critical need to redesign the way supports and services are delivered by transforming the Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) framework. However, the new framework must respond to the unique needs of communities across the province by delivering programs that are accessible, inclusive, culturally safe, and focused on addressing the needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families.

In 2022, the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) identified several gaps regarding access. This included accessing supports and services in a timely manner, coordination across services, access to information, and systems navigation support. Families in rural communities reported that even if funding is available qualified staff is not. The transformation of the CYSN service framework has promised to address the needs of communities across B.C. However, there are serious concerns about funding and implementation of the new framework and how it will address current gaps in supports and services. In 2023, the RCY estimated that 114,297 children and youth in B.C. have a disability. The current system services about 35,000 children and youth, meaning approximately 80,000 are left out. Families are on seemingly endless waitlists and have little confidence they will receive support.

Children and youth with disabilities from 0 to 25 years and their families urgently need timely, equitable and universal access in their communities to supports and services, including assessments, intervention therapies, family respite, mental health supports, medical and in-home supports, inclusive child care, and inclusive age-appropriate before and after school care programs.

## Questions

- **6.1:** Within your first year of being elected, will you commit to increasing Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) program funds to:
  - Immediately support children and youth with disabilities and their families.
  - Address gaps and barriers that families are experiencing within the current service framework through a more equitable distribution of resources?
- **6.2:** If elected, will you ensure that the data collected through community engagements during 2023 & 2024 is acted upon in the development and implementation of the new CYSN framework?
- **6.3:** If elected, will you work across party interests to ensure the new CYSN framework is adequately funded on an ongoing basis to respond to the needs of communities and deliver services that are accessible, inclusive, culturally safe and focused on addressing the needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families to realize this vision:

*Children and youth with disabilities from 0 to 25 years and their families have access to timely, equitable and universal access in their communities to supports and services, including assessments, intervention therapies, family respite, mental health supports, medical and in-home supports, inclusive child care, and inclusive age-appropriate before- and after-school care programs.*
- **6.4:** If elected, will you collaborate with other ministries to create a workforce strategy to increase the pool of professionals providing supports and services for children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families across the province?
- **6.5:** If elected, will you work with the office of the Attorney General to conclude the process to [expand the mandate](#) of the Representative for Children and Youth to include education, health, and mental health?

## Your Answers

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>1.1:</b> If elected, will you support the development, funding, and implementation of a health care strategy to adequately respond to the immediate and ongoing needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>1.2:</b> If elected, will you allocate annual targeted funds to strengthen the Health Services for Community Living program to ensure access to community nursing supports and to respond to ongoing population growth?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>1.3:</b> If elected, will you establish an action plan with provincial targets to attract more medical specialists with expertise in health care related to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to all regions of the province?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2.1:</b> If elected, will you support a targeted investment for the development of a pediatric health strategy that utilizes existing recommended guidelines to equitably respond to the health needs of children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2.2:</b> If elected, will you support the alignment of policy and practice with the recommended guidelines to ensure continuity of health care as youth transition to adulthood, including a person and family-centred approach to the transition that allows the necessary time to connect to the adult model of health care?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2.3:</b> If elected, will you commit to creating community-based care coordination and navigation support programs for families, including nurse navigators and health-based social workers, while also streamlining services into a system that is easier to navigate?

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>3.1:</b> If elected, will you support the development and funding of a mental health strategy that is inclusive, equitable, intersectional, robust, and culturally safe to respond to the mental health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the lifespan; offering diverse and holistic options on a continuum of care and coordinated across systems?</p>
		<p><b>3.2:</b> If elected, will you commit to setting targeted funds in the provincial budget with accountability measures in place, to increase regional capacity to address the mental health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by:</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensuring that mainstream mental health services (including Foundry) become inclusive of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reducing wait times for specialized services, like the regional Developmental Disabilities Mental Health services, and enhancing their capacity to support youth during their transition to adulthood.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Addressing the lack of professionals with expertise in intellectual and developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health challenges by creating a strategy for training, recruiting, and attracting specialists across the continuum of care.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enhancing prevention and assessment, in alignment with the <a href="#">Re-imagining Community Inclusion Roadmap</a>, to adequately support people's mental health needs?</li> </ul>

Yes	No	
		<p><b>4.1:</b> If elected, will you ensure key changes are made to the provincial Persons with Disabilities (PWD) program to help lift people out of poverty, including:</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rates that guarantee a liveable income and are indexed to inflation, beginning at \$2,400 a month.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individualized Benefits (attached to the person, not the household).</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The allowance of combined and stackable provincial and federal benefits, without clawbacks.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase the health supplement benefit to provide needed access to pharmaceuticals, vision care, and equipment to support disability-related needs?</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>4.2:</b> If elected, will you engage stakeholders to establish an inclusive definition of affordable housing?</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>4.3:</b> If elected, will you take immediate action to work with the federal government to facilitate access to the Disability Tax Credit and the Canada Disability Benefit by establishing an application process that automatically approves people who have applied for and are eligible to receive provincial benefits?</p>
		<p><b>4.4:</b> If elected, will you increase the supply and availability of housing options to meet existing and emerging needs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expanding the mix of housing options available across affordability thresholds.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Addressing the current affordability gap within each municipality across B.C.</li> </ul>

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increasing the number of portable rental supplements targeted for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>4.5:</b> If elected, will you adopt an inclusive housing standard to respond to gaps in the current housing crisis with community-based targeted strategies? Specifically, for people in extreme housing need, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are at a higher risk of housing insecurity.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>5.1:</b> If elected, will you engage with stakeholders to create targeted poverty reduction measures specific to childhood disability that ensure policies and programs are in place and coordinated across all ministries to support the needs of families?</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>5.2:</b> If elected, will you ensure that through federal and provincial funds, families with children with disabilities have equitable access to inclusive child care supports in their community, including age-appropriate and well-supported before and after school care, to reduce the barriers that parents/caregivers face to join the workforce?</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>5.3:</b> Financial supports are required to ensure needs are met regarding access to high-quality, equitable, and accessible health care, housing, transportation, and disability-related services. If elected, will you ensure these measures toward income security for families are put in place and are stackable with other benefits, without clawbacks?</p>



Yes	No	
		<p><b>6.1:</b> Within your first year of being elected, will you commit to increasing Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) program funds to:</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Immediately support children and youth with disabilities and their families.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Address gaps and barriers that families are experiencing within the current service framework through a more equitable distribution of resources?</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>6.2:</b> If elected, will you ensure that the data collected through community engagements during 2023 &amp; 2024 is acted upon in the development and implementation of the new CYSN framework?</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>6.3:</b> If elected, will you work across party interests to ensure the new CYSN framework is adequately funded on an ongoing basis to respond to the needs of communities and deliver services that are accessible, inclusive, culturally safe and focused on addressing the needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families to realize this vision:</p> <p><i>Children and youth with disabilities from 0 to 25 years and their families have access to timely, equitable and universal access in their communities to supports and services, including assessments, intervention therapies, family respite, mental health supports, medical and in-home supports, inclusive child care, and inclusive age-appropriate before- and after-school care programs.</i></p>

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>6.4:</b> If elected, will you collaborate with other ministries to create a workforce strategy to increase the pool of professionals providing supports and services for children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families across the province?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>6.5:</b> If elected, will you work with the office of the Attorney General to conclude the process to <a href="#">expand the mandate</a> of the Representative for Children and Youth to include education, health, and mental health?