

Appendix

Inclusion BC Background Document

Issue	Page
• Supports to Children and Families	1
• Inclusive Education	2
• Income Security and Disability Support	3
• Inclusive Housing	4
• Health	5
• Mental Health	6
• Nursing Support Services	6

Issue #1

Robust, Flexible Child and Family Support

Family caregivers play a critical role in helping to build strong communities by raising healthy, resilient children and youth. All families need and benefit from formal and informal community supports, which are especially critical to ensuring successful outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.

During COVID-19, family caregivers stepped up to provide a critical safety net when many of our formal school, health and social programs were curtailed or put on hold. Many of these families were already exhausted by the stresses of supporting children and youth with complex needs without adequate professional help. They had no choice but to take on these added support roles while also struggling with the same broader COVID-19 stresses as the rest of us.

The pandemic exacerbated well-documented flaws of an opaque, complex, rigid and often inequitable system that too often fails families instead of meeting them where they're at. Ministry efforts to provide limited relief within a flawed framework fell disastrously short of what was needed, resulting in extreme hardship and harm.

Over the past two years, the Ministry for Children and Family Development has worked with families and community leaders to design much-needed systemic reforms through the new **Children and Youth with Special Needs (CYSN) Framework**. This Framework needs to be implemented without further delay and adequately funded to strengthen inclusion and equity while reducing barriers to access.



Similar past reform attempts failed due to inadequate budget investment and a ministry culture that has resisted meaningful collaboration and partnerships. But this time can be different, and we CAN work together to drive real change.

Questions

- **1.1:** Within your first year of being elected, will you ensure the ministry is funded and supported to implement needed reforms under the new CYSN Framework?
- **1.2:** If elected, will you increase program funding and support for more equitable distribution of available resources to ensure families have timely, universal access everywhere in BC to:
 - a core suite of early intervention therapies;
 - timely assessments;
 - family respite; health, medical and in-home supports;
 - access to before/after-school programs, including for older children and youth with disabilities.
- **1.3:** If elected, will you work with the federal government to ensure universal access to inclusive childcare supports to help parents of children and youth with diverse needs to return to work to support BC's recovery?

Issue #2

Inclusive Education

Despite the benefits and formal commitments to inclusion, implementation in BC's K-12 education system has been highly inconsistent. Many school boards still see it as an aspirational target, not a core mandate, and inclusion supports are often sacrificed to balance budgets.

These gaps were recognized in the [2019 report of the Education Ministry's independent Funding Model Review Panel](#), which urged BC to prioritize budgets that support inclusion of vulnerable students, with remaining available dollars going to general education services.

Students with special needs are too often denied:

- Timely access to assessments that identify their specific educational needs.
- Appropriate support and resources in the classrooms to access the curriculum.
- Adequate training of teachers and staff on inclusive educational approaches.

Instead we see the continuation of programs that perpetuate segregated structures and mindsets, where students with disabilities are not seen as full members of their communities.

In its COVID-19 response, the Ministry of Education consulted with community partners and took meaningful steps to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities and extra support needs were acknowledged. These efforts were reflected in guidelines and measures, meant to ensure that equitable access



was provided at every school, to all students who needed support. However, implementation was inconsistent among school districts and many plans did not reflect BC's commitments to inclusion, flexibility and equitable access for all. This resulted in the further exclusion of students with special needs.

Emergency responses to the pandemic have the potential to finally start tackling root causes of long-festering problems. If we seize the opportunity to build it right, we can create a post-COVID reality that actually works better for everyone, that offers more built-in resilience to weather future challenges and that better accommodate diversity and vulnerability.

Questions:

- **2.1:** If elected, will you ensure that the Ministerial Policy on Inclusive Education is updated to bring it up to the standards set by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which establishes inclusive education as a fundamental right of children?
- **2.2:** If elected, will you support the implementation of the Independent Funding Model Review Panel's advice to prioritize budget allocations that support inclusion of vulnerable students, with remaining dollars going to general education services?
- **2.3:** If elected, will you support the continuation of the collaborative tables that were established for the Funding Model review and the COVID-19 response which have shown to effectively inform policy response and reforms?
- **2.4:** If elected, will you engage stakeholders to establish accountability measures to ensure that school districts are implementing inclusive education policies and guidelines?

Issue #3

Income Security & Disability Support

Income security for individuals and families is key to maintaining strong, healthy communities. Yet most British Columbian adults with intellectual disabilities are condemned to lifelong poverty and dependence on friends and relatives for basic living needs. Adults living on provincial Persons with

Disability (PWD) benefits are often forced to choose between safe housing, adequate nutrition and basic health care.

When millions lost their jobs during COVID-19, Canada immediately recognized the urgency to ensure income security through the national \$2,000/month CERB benefit. BC's Ministry for Social Development and Poverty Reduction was also quick to respond with a \$300 monthly COVID-19 supplement and exemptions to stop clawbacks of federal benefits. Working with community partners, the Ministry also moved quickly to strengthen and adapt the supplemental disability supports funded through Community Living BC.



This strong, coordinated response in the face of a national collective crisis was in many ways a model for finally confronting the individual crisis lifestyle that is the daily reality for so many in this especially vulnerable group and to set a course for true equity, social justice and inclusion.

Questions

- **3.1:** If elected, will you continue the \$300 monthly PWD supplement which has made a huge difference in people's lives and make it permanent, with future benefit rates adjusted annually to match inflation in the 2021 BC Budget?
- **3.2:** To support an effective Covid-19 response in the community inclusion sector, BC established collaborative tables and partnerships. This approach was highly effective and has provided a strong foundation for shaping ongoing reforms. If elected, will you continue these collaborative tables and partnerships?
- **3.3:** If elected, will you engage with federal authorities to help shape a new national disability benefit that assures income security and allows all persons with disabilities to live safely, independently and with dignity?
- **3.4:** Disability supports funded through Community Living BC are critical to the security of adults with intellectual disabilities, yet underfunding leads to extreme rationing and long waitlists. If elected, will you ensure adequate budget increases to allow these programs to meet their intended objectives without undue delays or barriers to access?

Issue #4

Inclusive Housing & Disability Support

People with intellectual disabilities face enormous barriers in finding a home that is affordable, safe and inclusive.

We know that:

- Adults with intellectual disabilities are over-represented in homeless shelters;
- Adults living with aging parents who can't support them forever don't have the resources or support to live outside the family home;
- Aging family caregivers are exhausted and worried about the future of their loved ones;
- Adults are denied their right to live inclusive and meaningful lives when they are placed in nursing homes or other congregate facilities because they cannot access community supports; and
- People with intellectual disabilities are four times more likely to be victims of violence and abuse than other British Columbians.

We estimate that over 5,000 BC adults with intellectual disabilities will need a new housing solution within the next 5 years. Developing inclusive housing is a complex undertaking that requires a proactive, collaborative approach



between all levels of government and community. Our federation members, including families and community agencies, have decades of expertise in this field and can leverage the strength of their community connections and assets to contribute to solutions. But we need provincial government support to offer solutions that meet the growing demand.

Portable rental supplements, which BC Housing offers in very limited numbers, offer a more immediate solution that can help many people with intellectual disabilities access safe, affordable housing outside the more formal home-share and group home models funded by CLBC. These supplements move with the tenant between rental units, providing flexibility to meet housing needs and freedom to access jobs and/or new community opportunities.

Questions

- **4.1:** If elected, will you fund more portable rental supplements for people with disabilities to access private and non-profit/government housing?
- **4.2:** If elected, will you commit to working collaboratively with municipal and federal governments, BC Housing and community groups to launch new and innovative housing initiatives that are accessible, inclusive and affordable?
- **4.3:** If elected, will you fund CLBC to provide people with disabilities the flexible options and supports they need to live where and how they want?

Issue #5

Health & Disability Supports

People with intellectual disabilities have unique and complex health needs. Studies have consistently shown that their health outcomes are much lower than the general population.

People with intellectual disabilities have equal rights to health care and health care options. Despite legislated protections, they are frequently denied equal access or are considered a lower priority due to their disability.

As institutions closed in BC between 1985 and 1996, the Provincial Medical Consultant Service for adults with an intellectual disability was established to support community-based health care for people with intellectual disabilities. The service, which ended in 2009, provided oversight and accountability for health care policy and outcomes and supported local health authorities with advice and resources on health care issues unique to people with intellectual disabilities.

The pandemic highlighted the need for expertise on the unique health challenges linked to an intellectual disability. Reinstating this position would help ensure people with intellectual disabilities can access the care they need, equitably and with dignity.



Question

- **5.1:** If elected, will you reinstate the Provincial Medical Consultant Services for people with intellectual disabilities?

Issue #6

Mental Health

Experts agree that the severity of mental illness can be significantly reduced if appropriate treatment is started promptly. But with wait times of up to a year to see a psychiatrist (through DDMH), help is only available after an issue becomes a crisis and the hospital Emergency Room is the only place to go.

Access to mental health services is a problem for people with and without disabilities, across the province. But people with intellectual/disabilities are often especially vulnerable and in need of early support.

- They are more likely to live in poverty. Those with lower incomes experience higher rates of repeat hospitalizations for mental illness.
- They often require specialized care from a psychiatrist who specializes in developmental disabilities. The wait to see these psychiatrists may be up to a year.
- The Emergency Room is often the only way to get help. Multiple studies show follow up care after an ER visit is inadequate for people with intellectual disabilities.

Question

- **6.1:** If elected, will you develop and implement a comprehensive mental health strategy to support people with intellectual disabilities?

Issue #7

Nursing Support Services for Children with Special Needs

Nursing Support Services assists parents and caregivers of children and youth (0-19) with medical complexities to lead active, healthy lives in their communities. Families depend on the knowledge and skills of a registered nurse to support them with the care of their children.

Despite the necessity of this service, huge barriers exist in accessing Nursing Support Services. The application process is obscure and restrictive and many families who need it don't qualify. Those that do qualify are often denied the hours they're promised, leaving them exhausted and burnt out. Too often, parents consider putting their children into foster care so they can receive the support services they need.



During the pandemic, many families have gone months without receiving support from a registered nurse. This is even after measures and guidelines were developed to resume services.

Questions

- **7:1:** If elected, will you ensure there is a thorough review of the Nursing Support Services Program to ensure that every child in British Columbia who needs the care of a registered nurse has access to that level of care?
- **7:2:** If elected, will you take meaningful action to eliminate barriers to access, add transparency to the process, and ensure that contracted agencies actually fulfill the hours of care that a child or youth with complex medical needs requires to live an active healthy life?

