

October 16, 2020
Response to Inclusion BC questionnaire

Children and Families

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: o a core suite of early intervention therapies; to timely assessments; to family respite; health, medical and in-home supports to 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?

There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a great deal of stress for families and that children who need extra supports have been disproportionately affected. With physical distancing requirements meaning that many families have been unable to access in-person services, our government took action to make services and supports more flexible and to try to make life easier. The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) established an Emergency Relief Fund for families to use for caregiver relief supports or meal preparation. The fund provided a direct payment of \$225 per month to eligible families for three months. Eligible families, including those receiving support from the Autism Funding Program and the At Home Program, could utilize medical benefits to purchase equipment and supplies, family counselling or therapy. Additional flexibility was provided for children and youth in transition periods to have an extra three months to use their funding to purchase intervention services, and the flexible use of respite funding has been extended to March 31, 2020.

We understand that these measures could not address all the difficulties created by the pandemic or meet the inclusion needs of all families and we are committed to keep working with these families and stakeholder groups like Inclusion BC as we move into recovery from the pandemic and to improving services to better meet the needs of children and youth with special needs (CYSN) as a whole. The current model for CYSN services was created by the BC Liberals and after we became government, it became increasingly clear that it was a fragmented model based on diagnosis rather than a child's actual need and that it was failing too many families. The pandemic has highlighted this failure and the many problems that families have been experiencing for so many years with this model. To make the necessary changes and to do it properly will not happen overnight, but we are committed to that work in collaboration with you.

The John Horgan government has made a historic investment in affordable quality childcare. After years of the childcare crisis being ignored by the BC Liberals, we have made good progress on our 10-year ChildcareBC plan but there is much more to do to make \$10 A Day childcare available to all families in the province. If re-elected, a BC NDP government will protect the principles of affordable, accessible, and inclusive quality child care in legislation and we will continue to work with the federal government to expand access, including to inclusive childcare for all families who want or need it.

Education

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?

The BCNDP while in government has made a base commitment to a progressive realization of increased accessibility and reduction of barriers by supporting Canada's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and agree that an inclusive education is a fundamental right of children.

The BC NDP commit to upholding and safeguarding the principles outlined in the UNCRPD:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality between men and women
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities
- Canada was one of the first countries to sign the UNCRPD, which guarantees human rights for an estimated 650 million individuals with disabilities around the world

An independent review panel was appointed by the BC NDP to review public education funding. This is the first such review in almost 30 years and 22 recommendations were made to improve equity, accountability, and financial management. The BC NDP is moving forward with a two-phased approach to implement those recommendations. We recognize that we have more work to do to reverse the years of cuts under the BC Liberals, and a re-elected John Horgan government remains committed to increasing support to school districts to continue to deliver a world class and inclusive public education.

Consultation with stakeholders, particularly ones with lived experience, remains at the core of our policy development. If we are re-elected we commit to continuing our collaborative approach to developing more inclusive policies.

Social Development and Poverty Reduction

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?

As soon as we came into office, the BC NDP took swift action to increase disability and income assistance by \$100 per month, followed by an additional rate increase of \$50 in 2019, along with [policy updates](#) that removed barriers and made it easier for people to get help when they need it most - a move away from the mean-spirited policies under the BC Liberals. We also increased the earnings exemptions for people living with a disability: annual earnings exemptions for a single person receiving disability assistance will increase by \$3,000 per year to \$15,000 starting this January.

Recognizing the increased challenges facing people on disability and income assistance as a result of the pandemic, the BC NDP government created a \$300 COVID-19 crisis supplement, extending it until the end of this year. , We will factor in our Poverty Reduction Strategy, as well as the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Basic Income coming later this year, and will

then determine the best approach and path forward to reducing poverty long-term while providing opportunities for jobs and skills training through our Economic Recovery Plan.

We know there is much more work to do and if re-elected, a John Horgan government will build on the success of the collaborative tables and partnerships. We recognize the value these tables brought to our pandemic response in terms of being able to identify concerns and work together to address them.

We have demonstrated our willingness to work with the federal government and look forward to continuing this successful partnership when it comes to identifying better ways to support people who are living with a disability.

The BC NDP government provided Community Living BC with \$1.14 billion in 2020-21, a \$75 million increase over the previous year. As well, after 10 years of no increases, our government increased funding for the CLBC Home Sharing program by \$45 million over three years. A BC NDP government will continue to focus on improving services for people living with disabilities in our province and look at ways that we can better support them in achieving their goals

The Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has been leading work across government to improve access for people with disabilities, including a consultation process that began in fall 2019 to bring in new accessibility legislation. A John Horgan NDP government will continue to make it a key priority working with people across the province to develop and bring in comprehensive accessibility legislation and together we will create a culture shift toward greater inclusion and accessibility across the province to make B.C. a more welcoming place for people living with disabilities.

Housing

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?

While rental supplements offer opportunities to quickly connect people with housing, our focus is on delivering new housing supply across the province in a range of affordability levels, to ensure that there is subsidized and affordable rental housing available to all who need it, including people with intellectual disabilities. At the same time, we know that rental supplements can provide an opportunity to quickly connect people with housing already available in the market, while buildings under construction are completed. Our platform

includes a commitment to delivering new rent supplements for people moving on from supportive housing, which will provide a way for current residents of supportive housing, including those with intellectual disabilities, who are ready to move on to independent living a way to do so affordably. This will also create more space in supportive housing for people in need of on-site supports.

Thanks to the partnership of many non-profits and local governments across the province, we have made good progress to date on our 10-year housing plan, Homes for BC, which includes a commitment to deliver 114,000 new affordable homes for people in communities of all sizes. To date, we have more than 25,000 homes complete or underway, in all categories of housing, from homes with supports for those experiencing homelessness and the first investment in new housing for women and children fleeing violence in two decades, to new indigenous housing both on- and off-reserve, new mixed-income rental housing for families and seniors with low to moderate incomes, and thousands of market rental units for middle-income families and individuals.

While we have made a good start, there is much more to do, and our government will again be counting on our strong partnerships as we work together to deliver the homes that all of our communities need, on our path to delivering the full 114,000 homes we have committed to. In addition to continuing our work to build these new subsidized and affordable market-rental homes, we will also expand the work of our innovative HousingHub team at BC Housing to work with our partners in the non-profit and co-op sectors to acquire and preserve existing affordable purpose-built rental housing.

In all of our investments, we work with our partners to ensure that a number of units are designed to be fully accessible, while others are designed to be able to be modified to meet a variety of accessibility needs. A re-elected BC NDP government would be pleased to meet with Inclusion BC to look at additional ways we can ensure that our housing investments provide homes for all who need them, in communities across the province.

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Health

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

After 16 years of BC Liberal cuts and underfunding, many people across BC were not getting the level of support and services they need. Our BC NDP government has been working hard over

the past three-and-a-half years to fix the problems and fill in the gaps, but there is still much more work to do.

If re-elected, our government would be happy to meet with your organization to discuss how we can ensure people with intellectual disabilities can access the care they need.

Mental Health

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

In June 2019, our BC NDP government launched a Pathway to Hope, our 10-year vision for mental health and addictions care that gets people the services they need in order to tackle problems early on and support their well-being.

If re-elected, our government would be happy to meet with your organization to discuss how we might expand this vision to include a comprehensive mental health strategy to support people with intellectual disabilities.

Nursing Support Services for Children with Special Needs

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?

The BC NDP is committed to a strong public health care system that meets the needs of people in BC.

This past August, our BC NDP government approved the concept plan for a first-of-its-kind children's complex care transition facility in B.C., operated by the BC Children's Hospital. This facility will fill gaps in much-needed services and supports for children and young people with complex care needs, and will be complementary to what is currently provided in acute care and community settings. The virtual campus and provincewide community-based care network will extend the reach of the centre to every area of B.C.

While this facility does not address the specific issues you've raised, should we form government, we will be happy to meet with your organization to discuss these challenges and how they might best be addressed.