



October 14th, 2020

Thank you for your inquiry into how the B.C. Greens will support nurses. We hope that the responses below demonstrate our commitment to ensuring they are supported through this pandemic and into the future.

Sincerely,
Sonia Furstenu
Leader, B.C. Green Party
B.C. Green Candidate for Cowichan Valley

1. If elected, what steps will your government take to ensure it is investing in training, education, and recruitment strategies? What will you do to urgently develop appropriate staffing strategies to protect nurses from burnout and exhaustion?

The B.C. Greens believe that improving accessibility to care and shifting health care spending to support prevention will help to address the root causes of over-reliance on the acute care network that is causing burnout in our frontline healthcare workers.

In the last government, the BC Greens helped champion the creation of primary care networks. These interprofessional and integrated teams are providing more access to physiotherapists, nurse practitioners, midwives, dieticians and other health professionals, helping alleviate the burden on doctors, increasing their ability to take on new patients, and take stress off of our acute care network.

2. If elected, what will your party do to ensure nurses have immediate access to nurse-specific mental health supports that are greatly needed to assist frontline workers who are experiencing severe anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress due to the pandemic?

We must support those who support our most vulnerable. Nurses are on the frontlines of our healthcare system, providing quality care to those who need it most in our province. They work tirelessly to keep us safe, and even more so in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the intersecting opioid crisis. If we are serious about building back better as a province then increasing the accessibility and affordability of mental health services needs to be a priority going forward, especially for those who provide care and emergency services.

The B.C. Greens believe that mental health should be treated like any other public health issue by properly resourcing it within our system. We will allocate \$1.0 billion over a four-year cycle to



address mental health care within the medical services plan. To ensure that this new program is meeting the needs of nurses, we would prioritize working with the B.C. Nurses Union to identify urgent actions that will deliver these mental health supports as soon as possible.

3. If elected, what will your party do to ensure an effective seniors' strategy is developed, that includes properly staffing long-term care facilities in a way that reflect the appropriate skill mix of RNs, LPNs and RPNs?

For years serious questions have been raised around accountability, monitoring, and financial oversight in BC's long term care homes. COVID-19 has exacerbated and shone the spotlight on these issues. It's made clear that our seniors have borne the worst outcomes of the pandemic, and that they deserve much better than the care they've received.

We believe that ultimately we need to shift away from a private for-profit model for long-term care, towards a mix of public, non-for-profit, community-based services and co-ops, which have better health outcomes. In the interim, we need to ensure that the companies that exist today are meeting the standards required for adequate care. This includes greater accountability for how funds are being used, and ensuring adequate staffing levels to ensure our seniors receive the care they need from the people with the right skills to deliver it.

4. If elected, what immediate steps will your party take to create long-term addictions and mental health solutions that are aimed to help those who use drugs, and prevent more overdoses?

The overdose crisis is one of the most pressing crises of our generation and it has so far not received the attention and action it deserves. Through courageous, evidence-based leadership, we can change this and save lives. We believe that our drug policies need to support public health and be based on a compassionate and evidence-based response. Key in this approach is providing people who use drugs with adequate resources to minimize the risks of drug use and support individual and public health.

We support the calls of experts, including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, to decriminalize personal possession of drugs. Decriminalization will reduce the stigma of drug use, which creates barriers to accessing important health services. It would allow us to reduce the costs of policing and the criminal justice system, which we can reallocate into improved evidence-based treatment programs and education.

We also support expanding safe supply of pharmaceuticals for people who use drugs. In the face of an illegal, toxic drug supply, safe supply is a crucial intervention to keep people safe. By providing access to alternatives through physicians and nurses, safe supply helps people at risk of overdose connect with healthcare professionals and reduce the risk of overdose death.

5. If elected, what will your government do to continue its commitment to procuring high-quality PPE to meet the current and anticipated future needs of nurses?

We support continued commitment to procuring high-quality PPE on a priority basis to meet the current and future needs of nurses and all front-line healthcare workers. We also need to be more prepared for future pandemics, to ensure that we don't have the same shortages that faced workers early on in the pandemic. Working with the Federal government we will continue the procurement strategy begun under this government, making sure that healthcare workers have uninterrupted access to high quality PPE.

6. If elected, what will your party do to ensure the appropriate safety measures are in place at all health care facilities so that nurses do not have to go to work fearing they will be the victim of an assault?

The B.C. Greens believe that everyone has the right to reasonable safety at work, including the supports needed to maintain and better workplace safety. We will work together with the B.C. Nurses Union and other healthcare professionals to gather a full understanding of the needs of nurses to make them safe, and work to push these in the Legislature and in our healthcare facilities across the province.

7. If elected, what will your party do to improve harm reduction capacity, public detox and rehabilitation services, while providing backup and relief for RNs, RPNs and LPNs working to address the overdose crisis?

Harm reduction interventions, such as providing sterile equipment, supervised consumption services, overdose prevention sites, and naloxone are cost-effective and key to ensuring that people at risk of overdose are kept alive. Harm reduction has been proven to reduce the risks of transmissible disease, prevent overdose fatalities, reduce public disorder, and create links for people to access healthcare services and enter treatment.

The B.C. Greens plan for accessible mental healthcare would include a comprehensive suite of interventions, including enhanced counselling outreach services to work with the homeless community. We would also allocate an additional \$200 million per year to invest in facilities to provide mental healthcare services and community-based centres for mental health and rehabilitation, accelerate capital plans for the construction of tertiary care facilities and detoxification beds, and protect operating funding for facilities.

8. If elected, how will your party accommodate the needs of nurses, including those pregnant and immune-compromised, in order to maximize our workforce while allowing them to provide valuable health services and stay healthy?



Those who are pregnant, immunocompromised, or living with vulnerable people should be able to continue participating in the workforce while maintaining their health. We would take the first steps towards policies that ensure that people have a viable choice between going back to full-time work, staying at home or balancing both, including consulting with business, labour and other stakeholders - including nurses - to explore options for reduced work weeks and/or flexible work hours.

For nurses with children, the BC Greens will create a comprehensive program for childcare and increase funding for child care and early childhood education programs by investing over \$500 million each year to increase quality capacity. Parents who choose to return to work will be supported by enhanced access to quality childcare, and more flexible work arrangements.