



April 26, 2017

Pat Danforth, Chair  
Jane Dyson, Executive Director  
Disability Alliance of BC  
#204 - 456 West Broadway,  
Vancouver BC V5Y 1R3  
Email: [feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org](mailto:feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org)

Re: DABC 2017 General Election Questionnaire

Dear Ms. Danforth and Ms. Dyson,

Thank you for your 2017 provincial election questionnaire. Please accept the detailed survey response below on behalf of all BC New Democrat candidates in the 2017 provincial election.

For more information on our platform, please visit [www.bcndp.ca/platform](http://www.bcndp.ca/platform)

Thank you.

\*\*\*

### **1. Provincial Disability Assistance**

**In April 2017, BC's provincial disability assistance rate was increased by \$50 to \$1,033 a month for a single person. While this increase was welcome, people with disabilities who receive the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit will continue to live in poverty. If elected would your government:**

**- Commit to indexing disability assistance and developing a clear timeline to increase assistance rates to \$1,200 a month?**

A: Yes - we will immediately increase disability assistance rates to \$1,133 per month. We will also convene an expert working group comprised of disability advocates and organizations like yours, people living in poverty, poverty reduction groups and others to develop a poverty reduction strategy. This working group, as part of its mandate to examine the full scope of poverty reduction initiatives, will consider and examine proposals like indexing assistance rates, and a schedule for increasing rates to \$1,200 per month.



We will also support assistance recipients as they re-enter the workforce by allowing them to keep an additional \$200 a month in earnings exemptions. John Horgan and a BC New Democrat government also will end Christy Clark's disability bus pass claw back, fully restoring the BC Bus Pass program for people with disabilities. We will also improve housing security for people with disabilities with our \$400 renter's credit, and by building new supported social housing under our plan to construct 114,000 units of housing.

Five times the BC NDP put forward a poverty reduction plan and five times Christy Clark and the BC Liberals rejected it. Right now, we're the only province in Canada that doesn't have one.

## **2. Guaranteed Annual Income for People with Disabilities**

**Ontario has announced it will test a basic income pilot starting in April 2017 while other provinces have committed to reviewing the concept. This model of income support has the potential to remove the stigma associated with receiving assistance and delivering supports through a more efficient and respectful process. If elected, would your government:**

- **Commit to working with the community to develop a pilot project to test a basic income for British Columbians with disabilities?**

A: As committed to above, we will bring together disability advocates and organizations like yourself, people living in poverty, poverty reduction groups and others who are committed to a better BC, to develop a poverty reduction strategy and examine the full scope of poverty reduction initiatives.

This proposal would be considered by this expert working group. The group would be able consult with Ontario counterparts about the development of their pilot and its preliminary results to date.

## **3. BC Accessibility Legislation**

**British Columbians with disabilities routinely experience barriers to accessing housing, employment, transportation, and other services. The Canadian government is currently creating accessibility legislation which will govern areas under federal jurisdiction. If elected, would your government:**

- **Commit to enacting accessibility legislation for BC with enforceable standards and regulations for areas under provincial jurisdiction?**

A: Yes – we will work with you and other stakeholders in developing a BC specific statute whose purpose is to ensure all individuals can fully participate and contribute to their communities and province, realize their aspirations and right to autonomy. TransLink's recent initial failure to



provide a fully accessible compass card faregate system is one of many examples highlighting the ongoing work that needs to be done to make BC barrier free.

#### **4. Addictions Support**

**Mental health and addiction services are usually provided through separate, non co-located organizations with separate treatment programs. This creates significant gaps and challenges for individuals needing to access help for both these conditions, the majority of people. If elected, would your government:**

**- Assist mental health and addictions services to operate as a shared practice in order to provide British Columbians with mental health and addiction issues better care and supports?**

A: Yes. For the last 16 years Christy Clark and the BC Liberals have been outsourcing much of our mental health and addictions services in the most expensive way possible. Instead of giving people the help and the care they need, Christy Clark leaves them to go through a revolving door of acute care hospital visits and interactions with police and other first responders.

Because of the lack of services, many people suffering from acute mental illness and addictions also end up involved in the justice system. Up to 60 per cent of people incarcerated in BC suffer from mental illness, addiction, or both. Prisons are a costly and ineffective substitute for robust mental health and addictions treatment. The current system often treats addiction separately from mental health, with large gaps in services. A BC NDP government would bring these services together to better help those in need. An evidence-based system of care for people living with addiction issues includes equal access for concurrent disorders.

After years of BC Liberal neglect, John Horgan and the BC NDP will transform our mental health system by improving access, investing in early prevention and providing opportunities for intervention before problems get worse.

This will be among the transformations to the mental health and substance use (MHSU) system an NDP government will implement, through a designated Minister for Mental Health and Addictions. This minister will also change and expand the MHSU system so it provides early intervention and prevention services, and an “ask once, get help fast” model of care delivery so people in crisis no longer wait for months for help. We intend to establish province wide, in urban and rural areas, multi-disciplinary Urgent Family Care Centres. Open seven days a week and in the evenings, these centres will provide, inter alia, community based mental health and addiction treatment services.

Whether someone is eight or 98, they need to have confidence that they only have to ask for help once to get the help they need fast, because mental health is as important as physical health.



- **Continue and increase funding to addictions recovery services, including InSites, on-street and residential daytox/detox, and no barrier housing?**

A: Yes. As cited above, the Minister for Mental Health and Addictions services under a NDP government will be responsible for realizing an “ask once, get help fast” model of care delivery so people in crisis no longer wait for months for help. Realizing this service model will entail, inter alia, expanding access to a wide range of MHSU evidence based and regulated treatment, including residential based treatment for addictions and concurrent disorders followed with enhanced outpatient supports, and no barrier housing. We will also support and pursue expanded harm reduction programs.

#### **5. ICBC Accident Benefits (Part 7) *Motor Vehicle Act***

**Disability Alliance BC (DABC) has been calling for an increase to Part 7 payments for years. People who qualify for Part 7 receive a maximum \$150,000 lifetime payout for rehabilitation and medical expenses. This amount has not increased for over 20 years and is clearly inadequate. Power wheelchairs, for example, can cost thousands of dollars and usually last for about 5 years. If an individual is at fault, they cannot file a tort or “not at fault” claim for expenses not covered by ICBC. If elected, would your government:**

- **Commit to working with the community in order to develop a clear timeline to increase payouts available through Part 7.**

A: Yes, we will work with you on updating Part 7 benefits, and they will also be considered by an independent review of ICBC we intend to order if elected. We have raised in the legislature this very issue of how Part 7 benefits, after being frozen for two decades, are now falling short of meeting the current costs for basic medical and rehabilitation needs: in response, the Liberal minister responsible for ICBC rejected the need to revisit the benefits.

#### **6. Home Care and Support**

**As British Columbians are aging, there will be an increased need for home care and home support to ensure that individuals can stay living in the community. This will be the case for all British Columbians including people with disabilities. The provision of home care and home support is trailing demand and people are not receiving the support they need to live with independence and dignity. If elected, would your government:**

- **Commit to improving home care and home support services to help ensure that people with disabilities and seniors have the supports they need to live in the community?**



A: Yes. Our plan for health care includes expanding the length and scope of home support and home care visits that help seniors stay at home. Furthermore, the Urgent Family Care Centres that we will establish in urban and rural areas will also provide home visits. These centres will deliver patient care through multi-disciplinary teams comprised of doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, dietitians, occupational and physical therapists, mental health and addictions treatment professionals, and other health professionals.

### **7. Rehab for people who are blind or have low vision**

**Currently there is no funding provided specifically for rehabilitation for people who are blind or who have low vision. Rehab includes all the skills individuals with this disability require to live independently, become employed or self-employed, and live a productive life. Such skills include, but are not limited to using Braille, travelling with a white cane, adaptive computer technology, cooking and life skills. If elected, would your government:**

- **Allocate/provide funding for blindness rehabilitation to individuals so that they can access the rehab services they need?**

A: Yes. We're committed to providing British Columbians who are blind and who have low vision with rehabilitation support.

### **8. Woodlands School Survivors**

**DABC has been helping the survivors of Woodlands School for more than 10 years to help them obtain recognition and compensation for the physical, sexual and emotional abuse they suffered while at Woodlands. In July 2010, the BC Supreme Court approved a settlement agreement to which former residents can apply for compensation. Tragically only individuals who were at Woodlands after August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1974 can apply which means the oldest and some of the most fragile survivors continue to be ignored. If elected, would your government:**

- **Ensure that all survivors, regardless of when they were at Woodlands, can apply for compensation?**

A: Yes. A NDP government will lift the August 1, 1974 cutoff date that excludes hundreds of Woodlands survivors from being able to apply for compensation. We believe providing some of the most marginalized British Columbians a sense of closure and justice for the systemic abuse they suffered is a priority for the people of our province. Despite repeated opportunities to do the just thing, to do the moral thing, the Liberal cabinet has systematically refused and resisted treating Woodlands survivors with fairness and compassion.