

Criteria for the BC Health Coalition's BC Election Platform Evaluation

May 2017

The BC Health Coalition is a province-wide non-partisan, non-profit coalition of individuals and organizations. Together we advocate for evidence-based improvements to our public health care system, provide public education on health care issues, and drive positive change to our health care system through campaigns across the province.

In order to help voters make their decision at the ballot box on May 9th, we reviewed the major B.C. parties' platforms to evaluate their positions on five areas that would improve public health care for everyone.

Our health care priority areas are based on the peer-reviewed research and on our mission to strengthen and defend the public health care system.

Parties can receive a score of up to 4 stars based on the following rubric:

- ★★★★ Party makes all priority commitments
- ★★★ Party makes most priority commitments
- ★★ Party makes some priority commitments, not most
- ★ Party makes one priority commitment
- Party makes no meaningful commitment

Stars are subtracted where a party commits to a measure that would have a negative impact.

In order to be included in our evaluation, parties must meet two of these three criteria: have candidates in at least 90 per cent of ridings, received at least 10 per cent of the popular vote in 2013, and have at least one seat in the legislature.

Our coalition will be ready to work with any government formed following the May 9th election to advance the five priority areas below.

Activate public solutions to reduce wait times: We need government leadership to introduce proven public solutions to shorten waits for everyone, not just the privileged few who can pay for care.

Priority Measures

- Make efficient use of existing public operating rooms
- Move to more centralized and coordinated management of waitlists, such as the "first available surgeon" model
- Scale up innovative B.C. pilot projects that have successfully reduced wait times

- Improve access to public home and community care services which is a limiting factor on hospital capacity

Examples of Negative Measures

- Sanction private hospital sector by expanding the scope of private, for-profit clinics to allow multiple day stays
- Prioritize contracting out of public procedures to private, for-profit clinics
- Build infrastructure without corresponding plans to address staffing shortages

Improve care for seniors, at home and in community: We need government leadership to address the decline in access to public home and community care for seniors that is leaving many seniors unsupported, caregivers overburdened, and hospitals overcrowded.

Priority Measures

- Increase access to publicly funded home support to meet the needs of the population (access dropped 30% 2001-2016)
- Increase time with each client for public home support workers and expand scope of services
- Increase access to publicly funded residential care and assisted living (access dropped 20% 2001-2016)
- Ensure B.C.'s care homes meet minimum staffing levels; legislate and enforce a new, higher minimum staffing level for safe, quality care
- Improve access to publicly funded home and community care provided by health authorities and non-profit organizations
- Provide regulatory guarantees that independent family councils are promoted, supported and involved by all residential facilities, individual health authorities and the Ministry of Health
- Integrate of seniors care services with the wider public health care system and with community-based services

Examples of Negative Measures

- Support for, or commitments to, the further privatization of the home and community care system

Increase access to primary care, including mental health services: Thousands of people in British Columbia don't have a doctor; we need government leadership to support team-based care so that primary care access isn't entirely reliant on a limited supply of doctors.

Priority Measures

- A clear and specific plan to implement accessible team-based primary care across the province
- Specific inclusion of care providers other than doctors (nurses, nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, dietitians, midwives, mental health workers, etc) in primary care
- Specific mention of plans to address health care access challenges in rural communities

Examples of Negative Measures

- Attempting to address primary care needs with doctors alone
- Lack of clarity regarding interdisciplinary integration

Mental health policies were not included in our ratings. We suggest that you look at information from an organization with expertise in this area: the Canadian Mental Health Association's summary is here: http://www.b4stage4.ca/bc_election_2017

Scrap MSP fees in favor of a fairer option: It's time to eliminate unfair MSP premiums and integrate these fees into British Columbia's regular income tax system.

Priority Measures

- A commitment to fully eliminate MSP Fees
- A timeline by which to fully eliminate MSP fees
- A more equitable plan to continue funding health care to ensure service levels are not impacted

Examples of Negative Measures

- Ending MSP fees without a fairer plan to continue funding health care to ensure service levels are not impacted

Implement a Poverty Reduction Plan

We know that poverty has major negative health impacts, and that addressing poverty can save a significant amount of money in terms of health care spending. Still, B.C. is the only province without a Poverty Reduction Plan. We've joined the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition in calling for a plan to address poverty.

Priority Measures

- A commitment to develop a Poverty Reduction Plan
- Increasing welfare and disability rates
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and restoring employment standards
- Focusing on those most likely to be impacted by poverty
- Adding to the number of social and co-op housing units by 10 000 a year
- Adopting a 10\$ a day child care plan
- Reduce tuition fees by 50% and increase the availability of post-secondary grants for low-income students
- Allow welfare recipients to attend post-secondary education and get apprenticeships
- Restoring and increasing funding K-12 education
- Make adult basic education and English-language education free

Examples of Negative Measures

- Attempting to address poverty primarily through tax cuts