



BC political parties graded on commitments to frontline health and social services

May 1, 2017

In the run up to the May 9 provincial election, the British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres (BCACHC) has graded the three main political parties on their commitment to some core health and healthcare issues for BC families and communities. The grades are based on parties' responses to a questionnaire that lists four recommendations to fix major gaps in health and social services throughout the province. The parties received the following grades:

BC Green Party: D

BC Liberal Party: C+

BC New Democratic Party: A

The BCACHC encourages all BC residents to consider these grades and to visit www.bcachc.org/election2017 before voting. Today, the BCACHC issued the following statement:

"We thank the BC Liberal Party and BC NDP for responding and we urge the BC Green Party to do so over the coming days so that BC residents can gauge the Party's position on these important issues.

We are pleased to see the BC Liberal Party declare its support for team-based primary care in BC. This is an important step forward. However, the Party did not respond specifically to the four questions tabled by the BCACHC and did not indicate any commitment to addressing major gaps faced by agencies that are already delivering team-based primary care throughout the province: Community Health Centres (CHCs). These gaps are clearly described in the BCACHC's April 2017 position paper and were recently underscored by Dr. Trevor Hancock in the Times Colonist.

Instead, the Liberal Party has indicated that it would invest \$90 million in team-based primary care based on a "new model" being piloted in Kamloops. This confounds understanding, since a true commitment to team-based primary care would require commitment to addressing major gaps faced by the agencies already providing these services. In addition to its silence on CHCs, the Liberal Party does not address the need for integration of team-based primary care with prevention and community outreach services that address social causes of illness – what are called the social determinants of health. We are left to speculate about what the \$90 million in spending on a "new model" will actually entail.

With respect to the BC NDP, we are very encouraged that the Party has expressed its full support for all four recommendations tabled by the BCACHC and has clearly committed to acting on them as important priorities, if elected. This includes commitment to filling the core funding gap faced by existing CHCs throughout the province and to expanding CHCs by making them a central pillar of BC's health system. The NDP has opted to use the language "Urgent Family Care Centres" in describing its plan for expansion of CHCs.



British Columbia Association of Community Health Centres

In addition to the NDP's commitment to expanding team-based primary care through these Urgent Family Care Centres, we are further encouraged that the NDP has recognized the importance of integrating primary care with community health and social services within these new centres to address social determinants of health such as food security and housing. This reflects best practice for comprehensive primary health care as promoted globally by the World Health Organization.

Whichever party is elected to form BC's new government, the BCACHC looks forward to working closely with both government and opposition parties to ensure that BC residents are provided access to the Community Health Centre services and programs they want and deserve. This reflects the spirit of the all-party BC Legislature Committee on Health which, in March 2017, strongly recommended that the BC Government invest in Community Health Centres throughout the province."

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