

bcasw

the hub of
communication,
advocacy and action
for social workers in bc.

BCASW Election Guide 2024

Every election is important and consequential however, this election, perhaps because our province is so polarized, will result in a government that will either continue a somewhat predictable trajectory or one that will substantially change direction on social, economic, and health policy.



BC ASSOCIATION *of*
SOCIAL WORKERS

For social workers, this is a critical time to ensure that the voices of those we serve — vulnerable individuals, families, and communities — are heard and prioritized by political leaders.

The 2024 provincial election presents an opportunity to advocate for policies and reforms that align with the core values of our profession, such as social justice, equity, and inclusion. As professionals on the frontlines of addressing complex social issues like mental health, child welfare, food and housing insecurity, and substance use, social workers play a pivotal role in advancing policies that can improve the lives of all British Columbians.

This election guide provides you with questions that you may use to ask candidates about their intentions if elected. Questions were gathered from BC Association of Social Workers Board Directors, staff, committee



members, and members of our communities of practice. Questions were grouped together, and each set of questions has a short preamble you may use to preface your question.

Your voice as a social worker is powerful. By engaging with candidates and raising these critical questions, you can help inform the policies that will shape the future of social work and the well-being of British Columbians. We encourage you to use this guide and actively participate in the election process.

The three main party platforms are available online.

- BC NDP - <https://www.bcndp.ca/actionplan>
- Conservative Party of BC - <https://www.conservativebc.ca/>
- Green Party of BC - <https://bcgreens2024.ca/2024-platform/>

You can vote if you are:

- a Canadian citizen, 18 or older on October 19, 2024, and a resident of B.C. since April 18, 2024.

**Get ready for
the Oct. 19th
provincial
election**



You may vote at the advance polls on October 10-13 and 15-16 | 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (local time). Advance polls are closed on Monday, October 14 for Thanksgiving. The final voting day is Saturday, October 19 | 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Pacific time) - <https://elections.bc.ca/>

Share your conversations with candidates on our social media.

- Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/bcasw>
- Twitter – <https://twitter.com/BCSocialWorkers>
- Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/socialworkersbc/>
- Threads - <https://www.threads.net/@socialworkersbc>
- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/bc-association-of-social-workers/>

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging



Anti-trans legislation presents significant risk to the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of us all. Saskatchewan and New Brunswick used the Notwithstanding Clause in their legislation. Alberta and Ontario are poised to bring anti-trans legislation to their legislatures.

If elected, what will you do to protect transgendered people and those who are sexual and gender diverse?

Are you in favour of continuing the SOGI curriculum in schools?

How will you ensure that government policies and practices reflect the diversity of BC's population?

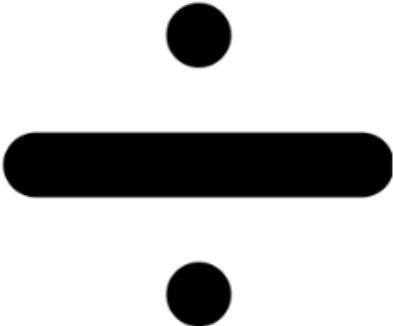

Despite the protections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms racism, discrimination, and violence against transgendered people has persisted and, in some jurisdictions, escalated.


If elected, will you publicly support initiatives to protect and include the sexual and gender diverse members of BC's communities?

Law enforcement has a complicated and inconsistent relationship with people who differ from the political and cultural majorities.

If elected, what policies and supports would you support to reduce conflict between diverse peoples and law enforcement?

What steps will you take to ensure that social workers have a role in designing and implementing community-based alternatives to policing?

	<p><u>Diverse communities have varied in their willingness and to accept law enforcement efforts to demonstrate changes in law enforcement attitudes and unfortunately high high-profile examples highlight that law enforcement attitudes are inconsistent within the services.</u></p> <p>What approaches would you be willing to support to both law enforcement and diverse people in healing their relationship to each other?</p>
<p>Division, Polarization, and Isolation</p> 	<p><u>The Covid pandemic, economic struggles, lack of affordable housing, wildfires, and more have stressed us physically and mentally, and stretched our social fabric. We see more division, polarization, and isolation now as a result.</u></p> <p>If elected, what will you do to address this situation?</p> <p>Are you doing anything on your campaign to reduce division, polarization, and isolation? If so, what?</p> <p>When you look at your opponents in this election, what two ideas or platform items do they have that you agree with and will work to accomplish or institute if elected?</p>
<p>Electoral Reform</p> 	<p><u>The basic problem with first past-the-post elections is that the overall results have little relationship to the popular vote.</u></p> <p>Will you support electoral reform that moves away from first past-the-post methods of election?</p> <p>Are you familiar with the history of efforts towards proportional representation elections and would you support a simple yes/no vote that does not include voting on methods of enacting proportional representation?</p>

	<p><u>This election has resulted in the folding of a political party to prevent vote-splitting which is an artifact of the first past-the-post voting system. This has the effect of limiting the choices of Canadians in BC.</u></p> <p>If elected, what will you do to address this? Will you or your party support another system such a proportional representation?</p>
<p>Environment and Climate Change</p> 	<p><u>British Columbia relies on its environment for its economic and social future.</u></p> <p>Please identify two ways in which climate change is impacting British Columbia and how you will address these.</p> <p>How will your government ensure that marginalized communities are not disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change?</p> <p><u>The costs of managing the environmental impacts of climate change are rising rapidly particularly in firefighting and disaster remediation such as seen during atmospheric rivers.</u></p> <p>If elected, how would you address the economic pressures created by environmental impacts that are inherently unpredictable, increasing in frequency and that can not be left unmanaged?</p> <p><u>BC relies on resource extraction, however the extraction of resources such as forestry and liquid natural gas can cause increases in climate change impacts during the extraction and then during use.</u></p> <p>What do you believe should be the economic drivers in the BC economy 10 years from today and if not natural resources, how would you transition the BC economy?</p>

Food Security



Recent studies indicate that a staggering 17% of British Columbians face food insecurity, underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue.

If elected, what actions would you take to increase food security?

Small farms and person-to-person food production face significant regulatory and cost barriers to being able to contribute to food security on the regional and community markets.

How will you maintain food safety standards while making it easier for food to be produced in smaller and more localized methods?

How would you increase the density of food availability in BC?

Health



Family doctors are in increasingly short supply and walk-in clinics are overwhelmed, driving increased traffic of non-emergency patients to emergency units which are themselves unable to maintain staffing.

What measures will you take immediately to address the short-term crisis in health and how will these measures transition into sustainable training and recruitment of the doctors, nurses, social workers, and allied professions necessary to have an effective public health system?

Will you support fast-tracking the verification and acceptance of foreign credentialed health professionals for licensing in BC?

For foreign credentialed health professionals who can not have their credentials validated for service in BC without training upgrades, will you support government funds being earmarked towards training these professionals?

Will you support funding for interdisciplinary teams that include social workers in hospitals and community health settings?

If elected, how will you ensure that mental health services are adequately funded and accessible to all, especially marginalized groups like youth, LGBTQ2+ individuals, and people experiencing homelessness?

Would you commit to increasing funding for community-based mental health services, including non-profit organizations that offer counselling and support services?

How will you address health and social service inequities faced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities, ensuring culturally appropriate care and support?

One of the hallmarks of the Canadian healthcare system is that services are publicly funded. Some parties have begun discussing partial or complete privatization of the healthcare system as a measure to reduce wait times and increase access.

Where do you and your party stand on this issue? Will you or your party support partial or full privatization?

The mental health care needs of Canadians came to the forefront during COVID and providing coverage for counselling through MSP was discussed.

Is this something your party will pursue?

What do you believe is the role of the publicly funded system in providing mental health care?

Homelessness



Tent encampments, street encampments, and sleeping rough have become increasingly prevalent, visible, and controversial as have housing projects and agencies attempting to support the unhoused populations.

What do you see as being the root causes of homelessness in BC and what measures would you support to reduce homelessness in BC?

Do you support the removal of tent encampments when no other suitable and affordable accommodation is available?

Housing



Lack of housing is an often-cited social determinant of health and contributing factor to unemployment, substance use, and decreased individual and community health.

What measures would you support to increase the housing supply?

It has become common for middle-class earners to spend more than 30% of their income on housing alone and increasingly common that 50% or more of income is spent on housing.

What measures will you support to address the rapidly rising costs of housing for middle class?

What role do you see for the provincial government in guiding municipal governments in housing project design through financial, legislative, or regulatory actions?

What specific steps would you take to address the lack of affordable housing in BC?

Income and Disability Assistance



A single person on income assistance in BC receives a maximum of \$1,060 (\$500 shelter and \$560 support) a month.

A single person with disability income assistance in BC receives a maximum of \$1,483 (\$500 shelter and \$984 support) a month.

If elected, what actions would you take with regard to these rates?

Universal Basic Income is an economic model where all members of society are provided a base level of income regardless of their earnings.

What is your understanding of this model, and would you implement UBI?

How will you address rising income inequality in BC? Will you support increasing social safety nets like income and disability assistance, as well as universal basic income?

What measures will your government take to reduce poverty in BC, especially in communities disproportionately impacted, such as Indigenous, racialized, and disabled populations?

Would you support the introduction of living wage legislation in BC, and if so, how would it be implemented?

Seniors living with disabilities struggle to pay for care as they age.

What actions will you take to ensure that social workers are adequately supported to address the needs of BC's aging population, particularly in long-term care and palliative care settings?

Indigenous Children



The number of all children in care in BC has gone down over the past five years however the percentage of Indigenous children in care continues to rise.

What specific steps will your government take to collaborate with Indigenous communities to reduce the number of Indigenous children in care?

The Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD) is often critiqued as a colonial institution.

What actions would you take to decolonize MCFD?

How will your government ensure that family reunification remains a priority in child welfare cases, particularly for Indigenous families?

How will you work to decolonize not only MCFD but also other government services to ensure that Indigenous voices and practices are integrated into decision-making processes?

Will you support legislation that gives Indigenous communities more control over the child welfare system, including child placement and family services?


Mental Health, Children, and Youth



Many children and youth across British Columbia have serious mental health issues.

If elected, what actions will you take to increase access to mental health services for children and youth?

If elected, what actions will you take to ensure that children are not placed into adult in-patient psychiatric units as is sometimes the situation now?

	<p><u>Privacy legislation currently prevents health professionals and other services from providing information to parents about their children’s mental health and drug use.</u></p> <p>If elected, would you see a need to change legislation to provide parents with this information? If yes, under what circumstances would a parent’s need to know override a child’s right to privacy and confidentiality?</p> <p>If elected, how will you improve the support system for children aging out of care to ensure they have access to housing, education, and employment opportunities?</p> <p>With increasing pressure on youth and rising mental health concerns, how will you ensure that school-based mental health services are available to all students?</p> <p>Would you support mandatory mental health curriculum in BC’s public schools, and if so, how would it be developed and delivered?</p>
<p>Professional regulation</p> 	<p><u>Social work is not a fully regulated profession in BC and that means the public is not fully protected.</u></p> <p>If elected, would you amend regulations to ensure that all social workers are registered with their regulatory college?</p> <p>Without regulation, how will your government ensure that social workers continue their professional development, including training in trauma-informed care and anti-racism?</p> <p>Will you act to ensure that people receiving services from social workers have a regulatory college to express any concerns to?</p>

Public recognition of social work



The multiple roles held by social workers in BC are not well known to the public.

Please name three areas of social work practice and if elected what you will do to strengthen public awareness of social worker's contributions to our communities?

How does your platform align with the core values of social justice and equity in supporting vulnerable populations?

What steps will you take to address the shortage of social workers in rural, remote, and underserved areas?

Public Transportation




Public transportation reduces the number of vehicles on the road which reduces climate-changing emissions and reduces ICBC insurance claims. Major cities, except for Vancouver, lack light rail transit, smaller cities often have ineffective intra-city public transportation and movement between centres is almost entirely dependent on private vehicles or air travel.

If elected, will you support the creation of light-rail transit systems in Victoria, Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, and similar sized centres?

If elected, will you support public rail transit with subsidies, public-private partnerships, or the creation of crown corporations?

If elected, will you support the creation of a public rail transit system that would function similarly to BC Ferries to provide affordable and efficient East-West transportation between the Southern regions and North-South in the Central and Northern regions?

	<p><u>Private companies such as VIA rail do run existing passenger train lines, however the cost is equal to or exceeding the costs of airline tickets.</u></p> <p>If elected, would you support subsidizing Via rail to encourage increased passenger train usage?</p> <p>Would you support subsidizing rail travel from Prince George to Prince Rupert to reduce the risks of travel on “the highway of tears”?</p>
<p>Racism and Antisemitism</p> 	<p><u>BC’s Human Rights Commissioner is calling for action to counter rising antisemitism and Islamophobia. There has been a surge of discrimination and violence targeting Jewish and Muslim people.</u></p> <p>If elected, how will your party ensure the safety of Muslim and Jewish minorities, especially during the conflict in the Middle East?</p> <p>What continued supports will you provide for Holocaust education in the public schools?</p> <p>What actions will you take to ensure students of all ages receive anti-hate curriculum?</p> <p>Would you require police, and other public servants receive mandatory training on responding to hate crimes?</p>

Seniors



Accountability for Care in Long Term Care

In Billions More Reasons to Care: Contracted Long-Term Care-Funding Review Update the former BC Seniors Advocate, Isobel Mckenzie, noted some concerning findings; specifically:

- Not- for -profit facilities spent 25% more on resident direct care and 27% more on indirect care than for-profit facilities;
- For-profit facilities spent 66% more per bed on building costs than not-for-profit facilities;
- For-profit facilities earned 7 times as much profit as not-for-profit facilities;
- Not-for- profit facilities delivered 93,000 more hours of direct care than they were funded to deliver, and;
- For-profits delivered 500,000 hours less than they were funded to deliver in 2021/22.

What will you do to ensure public monies provided for care are spent only on care?

The Need for Mandated Social Work Positions in LTC

In the 3.36 hours of direct care that care home residents are to receive, social work time in care is not systematically included as a member of the allied health team or counted in the 3.36 hours even though social workers are dedicated to person centred care.

Will you mandate social work as a required allied health role in LTC to count toward the provision of care hours?

Models of Seniors Care and Housing

Action for Reform of Residential Care BC has been asking for the establishment of a provincial Roundtable to collect community-based expertise in innovative models of serving older adults in care settings.

Will you support the establishment of a provincial roundtable to provide support to your government on more person-centred models of care as requested by Action for Reform of Residential Care?

Up-to-date estimates for British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2024) are that 19.8% of our population is aged 65 and over.

How much emphasis will you place on community development of prevention; and intervention that will enable social models of care as well as health models of care?

Would you consider implementing models of housing that would provide housing and support for older adults, and college and university students in social work, health related areas where they would live together in the same building. A goal would be to diminish ageist attitudes and hopefully encourage social support for the students as well as the seniors. Perhaps such housing could be established on university or college campuses?

Home Support

British Columbians pay some of the highest user fees for home support in Canada.

If elected, will you eliminate the user fees in BC to enable citizens to age in place in the community which is what older adults want?

The Continuing Care Act eliminated home support services such as housekeeping, meal preparation, and transportation in the 1990s. These supports are integral to seniors remaining in their own homes.

If elected, will you amend the Continuing Care Act to include these services?

Aging and Indigenous Demographics

The numbers of older adults are increasing as predicted for decades. Increasingly older adults report feeling blamed for being older and at times in need of services.

What are your long-term plans to provide sustainable supports to our aging demographic in the ways they wish, in a way that doesn't blame people for aging/needing supports given that we've known for a long time about the growing proportion of older adults?

How will your government implement the Declaration Act regarding government services/supports for older Metis, First Nations and Inuit adults?

The BC Seniors Advocate reports that approximately 1 in 6 people aged 60 years or older experienced some form of abuse.

How will your government work with social workers to address elder abuse and ensure that older adults receive proper care and dignity in their final years?

Unregulated toxic drug supply and associated overdose deaths



Since the public health crisis was announced in April 2016, almost 15,000 British Columbians have died from overdose deaths attributed to the toxic unregulated drug supply.

If elected, will you work to increase harm reduction approaches, treatment, or both?

Please name two harm reduction services provided by BC and indicate whether you would keep them or dissolve them?

If elected, what actions will you take to increase access under BC's safer supply program (prescribed supply) and expand the variety of drugs available through the program?

Based on information from BC's Public Health Office, there may be as many as 115,000 British Columbians who meet criteria for an Opioid Use Disorder diagnosis.

What in your opinion is the cause of opioid use?

BC Premier David Eby recently announced that involuntary care under the Mental Health Act would increase. In recent years, BC has issued 30,000 certificates to detain and treat about 20,000 people against their will.

Given that there is little to no evidence to support coercive treatment's effectiveness, will you work to provide alternatives to this approach. If so, what are the alternatives?

Some have criticized the current Mental Health Act as archaic and badly in need of revisions.

If elected, what revisions would you like to see made to the Mental Health Act?

In your opinion, does the current Mental Health Act adequately protect people's human rights? If no, what revisions are needed?

What reforms would you propose to the criminal justice system to ensure that people struggling with mental illness and addiction are diverted into treatment and care rather than incarceration?

Decriminalization has both increased the likelihood of emergency services being able to reach opioid users and has increased the visibility of opioid use to the general public.

How will you respond to your constituents when there are conflicts between fixed location treatment services and the public?

The police have become de facto mental health crisis responders by necessity and are operating without the training or mandates to function in this role while also maintaining their mandate to public safety and law enforcement.

How will you address this complicated expanded role for police officers? Do you believe that law enforcement should be tasked with mental health crisis interventions?

Projects, in which professions qualified to provide mental health interventions, have received positive reviews by law enforcement and show promise in preventing escalations and adverse outcomes in police involved interventions.

If elected, will you encourage government to fund the training and employment of qualified mental health providers to be 24/7 available to law enforcement services?

Women's Reproductive Rights



Political parties hold various positions on women's reproductive rights.

If elected, what actions will you take to ensure women across BC have readily accessible reproductive health care?

If your party signals that it would limit access to reproductive health care for women, will you leave your party's caucus?

Will you stand up for women's reproductive health regardless of your party's stance?



You can help shape the future of our province and strengthen professional social work in BC. We encourage all social workers to use this guide to engage with candidates.

