

BCRTA'S

2024

BC ELECTION

ISSUES GUIDE

HEALTH AND HOUSING · PUBLIC EDUCATION · PUBLIC SERVICES



ISSUE: SUPPORTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

There is a chronic teacher supply problem in BC and many classes are being instructed by uncertified individuals.

FACTS

1. For teaching positions longer than 20 days, School Boards are required to advertise for qualified teachers prior to hiring non-certified replacements with a Letter of Permission (LOP).
2. In many School Districts there are too few qualified teachers, and the number of LOPs for non-certified replacements to work in classrooms continues to increase.
3. There is no requirement to issue an LOP to hire a replacement if the substitute position is a temporary absence less than 20 days.
4. Media reports show the number of active LOPs has risen sharply from 92 in 2019, to over 300 in 2023.
5. In many School Districts, especially rural School Districts, there are an increasing number of substitute positions being filled by non-certified replacements who do not even have an LOP.
6. Filling teacher absences has become a greater problem, with many non-enrolling teachers pulled from other positions to fill vacancies.
7. The Minister of Education has acknowledged these are serious problems, and an August 26 news release points to several programs to train more teachers, certify more international teachers, provide incentives to teaching in rural areas, and increase the number of seats in teacher education programs.

QUESTIONS FOR MLA CANDIDATES

1. If elected, how will your party increase the number of teachers in rural areas?
2. If elected, how will your party reduce the number of uncertified people working in classrooms?
3. If elected, will your party ensure the required funding to address teacher supply?

REFERENCES

<https://vancouver.citynews.ca/2024/03/17/bc-teachers-shortage-uncertified-instructors/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/reliance-on-uncertified-teachers-in-b-c-1.7147270>

<https://islandsocialtrends.ca/bc-education-trying-to-keep-up-with-demand-for-teachers/>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024ECC0105-001373>

ISSUE: NATIONAL PHARMACARE AND THE CANADA DENTAL CARE PROGRAM

The newly introduced Canadian Dental Care Program (CDCP) and Pharmacare will improve health care for Canadians; however, both programs currently fall far short of comprehensive support to seniors.

FACTS

1. The newly introduced CDCP limits coverage for retirees to those who do not have access to dental benefits. Since all retired teachers in the BC Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) have access to dental plans, the CDCP plan is closed to them. However the dental plans available to TPP recipients are expensive, and those enrolled pay 100% of all premiums with no subsidy from employers or government.
2. The Green Shield 2024 single premium is \$421/year for a basic plan, or \$796/year for an enhanced plan. Many BC retired teachers have very small pensions - half of receive less than \$31,500, and many find the dental plan to be too expensive.
3. The eligibility rule needs to be amended to include all those who have access to a plan, but have low income.
4. The federal Pharmacare program provides coverage for birth control and diabetes medications. The health of seniors depends on a safe and affordable supply of many more medications. The top categories of drugs prescribed for seniors in Canada address cholesterol, pain relief, stomach acid and high blood pressure. None of these drugs are currently covered by federal Pharmacare. Since the BC Fair Pharmacare formula covers some medications in these categories, work is needed to align the provincial and federal programs, such that there is an improved benefit for seniors.

QUESTIONS FOR MLA CANDIDATES

1. If elected, how will your party work with the federal government to change the access requirements for the Canadian Dental Care Program to provide coverage to pensioned retirees with low income?
2. If elected, how will your party work to expand the federal and provincial Pharmacare programs to include those medications most used by seniors?

REFERENCES

<https://tpp.pensionsbc.ca> <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/dental/dental-care-plan.html>
[https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db347.htm#:~:text=The%20most%20commonly%20used%20types%20of%20prescription%20drugs%20among%20Canadian,and%20antidiabetic%20agents%20\(14.8%25\).](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db347.htm#:~:text=The%20most%20commonly%20used%20types%20of%20prescription%20drugs%20among%20Canadian,and%20antidiabetic%20agents%20(14.8%25).)

ISSUE: RETIREMENT HOME TENANCY RIGHTS

Many seniors residing in independent living residences experience issues related to their tenancy rights under the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA).

FACTS

1. Seniors who wish to downsize or need assistance with the tasks of daily life often move into an independent living residence. In this housing, seniors rent an apartment with a hospitality service package with meals and housekeeping, which are required as part of the tenancy.
2. In July 2024 the Office of the Seniors Advocate urged the provincial government to enforce the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) to protect the 30,000 B.C. seniors in retirement homes from illegal rent increases and evictions.
 - a. Retirement homes residents are at risk of eviction when landlords raise the cost of hospitality services. Many BC seniors have been notified that their hospitality service costs will increase by as much as 24%, the increase to take effect within weeks, and these fees must be paid or they will have to move out.
 - b. The power dynamic between seniors in independent living and their landlords is weighted towards the landlord. Some residents do not raise concerns about the increasing cost of rents and services because they fear losing their accommodation.
3. In July 2024 the Ministry of Housing stated: *“...services or facilities that the tenant is required to receive and that they cannot opt out of would form part of the tenancy agreement. In these cases, the costs associated with the services and facilities would be captured under “rent” and would be*

subject to the rent increase provisions under the RTA, even if the services and facilities and their costs are set out under a separate agreement. Similarly, these services and facilities could only be terminated or restricted in accordance with the RTA.”

4. The ministry stated that it will take steps to improve the Residential Tenancy Branch complaint process to reduce intimidation and vulnerability faced by many seniors when raising tenancy issues.

QUESTIONS FOR MLA CANDIDATES

1. How will you ensure that mandatory hospitality and service fees form part of the rental contract and are subject to the provisions of the Residential Tenancy Act, including annual limits on increases?
2. What will your party do to ensure that the Residential Tenancy Branch dispute process is affordable and easy to navigate for senior independent living residents?
5. How will your party review and monitor the practices, capacity and expertise of the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) to eliminate the intimidation and vulnerability many seniors feel?

REFERENCES

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/forgotten-rights-seniors-not-afforded-equal-rent-protection/>

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/app/uploads/sites/4/2024/07/STMT-IL-Report-RTB-Letter-July-11-final-1.pdf>

ISSUE: TRANSPORTATION FOR SENIORS IN BC

Many seniors experience barriers to access to transportation, particularly in small and rural communities where public transportation is limited.

FACTS

1. The lack of available and affordable transportation, impacts healthcare access for seniors, particularly for those who live in smaller communities without access to volunteer drivers, HandyDART or health authority buses.
2. In 2023, the provincial government appointed a Special All-Party Committee to review Passenger Directed Vehicles (PDV). PDV's are taxis and ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft. The Advocate for Seniors spoke to the Special Committee about the need for the Province to provide transportation services differently for older British Columbians and proposed developing a province-wide seniors ride-hailing program, distinct from other ride-hailing services like Uber or Lyft. The proposed service would connect drivers and seniors. The program would operate on a provincial platform, be unique to seniors' needs and affordable.
3. The All-Party Committee agreed that the Passenger Transportation Act does not do enough to promote passenger directed transportation in small, rural, and remote communities in BC, and there was a need to respond to the unique circumstances of smaller communities.
4. Noting that a market to support sustainable PDV services in some areas could be challenging, the All-Party Committee discussed the role PDVs could fill within the larger transportation

ecosystem, notably improving connectivity within and between communities, and recommended government take a holistic approach to improving transportation service in small, rural, and remote communities.

QUESTIONS FOR MLA CANDIDATES

1. How will your party work with the Ministry of Transportation to improve transportation service for seniors living in small, rural and remote communities in BC?
2. What amendments to the Passenger Transport Act will your party propose to encourage PDV transportation in small, rural and remote communities?
3. Will your party prioritize a review of the Seniors Advocate's proposal for a province-wide seniors' ride-hailing program with appropriate Ministry and Transit authorities?

REFERENCES

https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/app/uploads/sites/4/2024/07/OSA-Annual-Report-2023_24_FINAL.pdf

https://www.leg.bc.ca/committee-content/CommitteeDocuments/42nd-parliament/5th-session/rpdv/SC-PDV-Report_42-5.pdf

ISSUE: AFFORDABILITY FOR SENIORS

BC Seniors with Low or No Pensions Face Severe Affordability Problems.

FACTS

The average teacher pension in BC is approximately \$32,000 per annum, and considering CPP and OAS give an average income total somewhere in the mid- to high \$40,000s.

These amounts do not allow for a carefree way of life financially, especially for those who are renting or still have a mortgage. Considering the average income level, this leaves a considerable number of our retirees receiving less than that. Often these low-income retirees struggle to cope, many of whom are women who took time out to raise a family and thus lost pension credits.

Statistics Canada shows that over 20% of senior Canadians are living in rental accommodation, which is increasingly precarious and unaffordable.

A reversal of income equity has occurred in the past quarter century. In 1996, just 2.2% of seniors were in the low-income segment (less than 50% of the median household income). By 2001, 8.6% of seniors were in the low-income group, compared to 16% of young adults. Remarkably, by 2021, it was 15.2% of seniors in the low-income group, compared to just 8.1% of younger adults.

The Housing Dimension

Keys to a healthy and happy life include adequate secure income and housing. Hence housing is considered a human right, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Canada is a signatory.

Seniors with low income may lose their homes if unable to afford the cost of maintaining them. BC seniors who are forced out of home ownership or who do not own their homes are faced with some of the highest rents in North America.

QUESTIONS FOR MLA CANDIDATES

1. In view of the close link between adequate income and housing how would you improve income support for low-income seniors?
2. What will you do to ensure that there is enough housing stock to provide appropriate housing for seniors?

REFERENCES

<https://uwbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/uwbc-seniors-housing-report-hi-res.pdf>

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/income-revenu/index-en.html>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>

The Tyee has written extensively on the whole topic of housing in BC of which this is just one example:

<https://thetyee.ca/News/2024/03/20/More-Seniors-Being-Denied-BC-Rental-Supports/>

ISSUE: HEALTH CARE CHAOS

BC is struggling with a severe doctor shortage and long wait times, while also experiencing a growing senior population who need medical care.

FACTS

The word ‘crisis’ appears time and again in reports and commentary describing BC Health Care. Shortages of doctors, nurses, and specialists along with ever lengthening wait times, closures, availability of emergency services and shortage of hospital beds are the major issues facing health care. Chronic conditions worsen for those on lengthy waiting lists. For older people the problems are compounded by access difficulties involved in transportation and after-care.

Data from the last 2021 census shows a growing increase in the number of older persons in the population, to one million in BC – comprising 20.3% of the population. The fastest growing segment of the population is the number of people over 85 years, bringing increasing treatment demands for more complex conditions.

Several areas in BC show a greater concentration of those over 65 years: Qualicum Beach, Parksville, Sidney, Gulf Islands, Nanaimo and Osoyoos. However, all areas of BC are struggling with the provision of adequate health services.

According to the BC College of Family Physicians, in 2022, close to one million BC residents did not have a family doctor. Walk-in clinics are overwhelmed, and many shut abruptly before scheduled closing times due to limits to how many patients can

be seen in a day. Overworked emergency departments deal with thousands of patients left with nowhere else to go.

QUESTIONS FOR MLA CANDIDATES

1. How will you address the shortage of health care services for the growing number of older persons?
2. What do you see as the most challenging issues in providing adequate health care for older people? How will you tackle those issues?

REFERENCES

<https://thetyee.ca/Newsearch/?q=bc+health+care>

<https://www.castanet.net/news/BC/465931/Health-minister-expects-even-bigger-demands-on-health-care-system-in-2024>

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8791325/bc-seniors-health-care-census/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/736176/top-healthcare-system-issues-in-canada/>

<https://www.timescolonist.com/life/one-in-five-adult-canadians-dont-have-a-family-doctor-study-finds-8791848>

<https://vancouversun.com/health/local-health/bc-no-family-doctor-care-options>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SENIORS' ISSUES AND
THE 2024 BC ELECTION SEE THE RESOURCES BELOW**

Online Election Guides

The Council of Senior Citizens Organizations BC (COSCO) has created a useful section on its website dedicated to issues for seniors.

<https://coscobc.org/elections/>

The BC Federation of Labour has media concerning the upcoming election:

<https://www.checktherecord.ca/>

BC Poverty Reduction Coalition Election Guide

<https://www.bcpovertyreduction.ca/s/bc-election-2024-fact-sheet.pdf>

Voter Information

Elections BC has useful information about registering to vote and finding candidates' information.

elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/register-to-vote/

mydistrict.elections.bc.ca

elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/candidate-list/

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<https://bcrta.ca/2024-BC-Election>



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The mission of the BC Retired Teachers' Association is to support the well-being of our members and seniors in general, to protect the rights of pensioners, and to support the cause of public education in British Columbia.