



Liberal Party of Canada

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Parti libéral du Canada

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The pandemic has taken a devastating toll on the mental health of Canadians and exposed glaring gaps in our mental health care system. If elected, what specific actions will your party take to make meaningful and sustained investments to close these critical gaps and ensure every Canadian has access to quality mental health care in their own community, no matter where they live?

In a typical year, 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness or addiction problem. And we know that over the last 18 months, nearly half of Canadians reported that their mental health worsened during the pandemic. Mental health is health. This is why the Liberal Party has made mental health a priority. A re-elected Liberal government will introduce a new dedicated transfer - the Canada Mental Health Transfer and provide \$4.5 billion in funding over the first five years.

We know that the past year has been particularly challenging for youth, which is why we will also invest \$500 million to ensure post-secondary students will have access to mental health services on campus. This will help hire 1,200 counsellors and mental health professionals on university and college campuses across Canada.

We will also continue to move forward with the establishment of a national, three-digit mental health hotline, so that Canadians and their families have somewhere to turn in a crisis.

This builds on the significant investments made by the federal Liberal government:

- \$5 billion to the provinces and territories to increase the availability of mental health care and home care;
- \$500 million in support during the pandemic for Canadians experiencing mental health challenges, homelessness or substance use;
- \$597.6 million for a distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategy for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation partners, including for the Indian Residential Schools Health Supports Program and Crisis Line and Hope for Wellness Line;
- \$107 million for mental health, culture, and emotional services in response to finding unmarked graves at sites of former Residential schools and the ongoing work of to finally bring their children home;
- \$100 million for mental health supports for health care workers, front-line workers, youth, seniors, Indigenous peoples, and racialized and Black Canadians, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19;
- \$140 million for supporting veterans' mental health to cover costs related to post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive and anxiety disorders;
- \$50 million for support to those at risk of COVID-19-related trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder; and



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- Launching the Wellness Together portal, which more than 1.2 million Canadians accessed in its first year alone.

As many mental health services are often delivered outside of hospitals and physicians' offices, they are not considered medically necessary under the *Canada Health Act* and, as such, are excluded from the federal government's Canada Health Transfer (CHT) to provinces and territories. If elected, what steps would your party take to improve accountability, funding and access to mental health services so that it is treated on par with physical health?

A re-elected Liberal government will create a new Canada Mental Health Transfer, and dedicate \$4.5 billion over five years to ensure that Canadians have access to the mental health services they need. This builds on the \$5 billion provided for mental health supports through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories, in 2017. As part of this new transfer, we will work with partners to ensure accountability and outcomes for all Canadians. This will also build on work underway, including through the \$45 million included in Budget 2021 for the development of national mental health care standards.

This commitment builds on the significant action we have taken to ensure mental health is treated on par with physical health. We passed the *Federal Framework on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Act* in 2018, recognizing that all Canadians are at-risk of PTSD and some more so due to their jobs. We are following up with \$50 million in funding through Budget 2021, to support health care workers and essential workers who are at-risk due to COVID-19 - this funding will be used by Health Canada for a mental health stream, as well as PHAC to develop a Knowledge Development and Exchange Hub.

We will also amend the Canada Labour Code to treat mental health in the same way we would physical health. We will incorporate a "right to disconnect" to protect the mental health of workers, many of whom are feeling the pressure of having had to turn their homes into their workplaces, which makes it so difficult to turn off your device at the end of the day. This can lead to burnout, anxiety, increased stress, etc.

A crucial social determinant of health is supportive and affordable housing, which ensures that people with mental illnesses and substance use problems have safe places to live as they recover. If elected, what specific investments and additional supports would your party put in place on supportive housing? How would your party ensure that people living with mental health illnesses and substance use problems are able to access affordable housing?

The Liberal Party of Canada recognizes that every Canadian deserves a home. That is why we released a fully costed, comprehensive plan to help make that happen, which has been recognized by experts



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including Generation Squeeze as being the best plan. This builds on the track record of the Liberal government, which includes:

- Investing \$2.5 billion in the Rapid Housing Initiative - \$2.5 billion for a total of at least 9,200 more housing units
- Signing a Canada Housing Benefit agreement with every province and territory, totalling \$4 billion in cost-matched funding and helping over 300,000 Canadians pay rent.
- Helping more than 2 million Canadians find places to call home through new builds, repairs, renovations, and rental subsidies.

Our plan *A Home for Everyone* will build or revitalize an additional 250,000 homes over 4 years. On top of the 285,000 homes currently being built each year, this will mean nearly 1.4 million homes will be built, preserved, or revitalized by 2025-26 under a re-elected Liberal government. This plan includes multiple avenues to home ownership as well as support for first-time buyers, including a new rent-to-own program; the First Home Savings Account, a tax free account that will allow Canadians under 40 to save up to \$40,000 for their first home, tax-free; doubling the First-Time Home Buyers Tax Credit, from \$5,000 to \$10,000; and a \$4 billion Housing Accelerator Fund to help cities build more homes.

Indigenous people in Canada have not only been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, they have endured sustained trauma as a result of colonialism, including the legacy of residential schools. If elected, what specific investments will your party introduce to scale up Indigenous-led mental health care to advance Reconciliation and better support Indigenous communities?

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed fundamental gaps in our society. Challenges that existed before the pandemic remain and others have been exacerbated. These are especially felt by Indigenous peoples who face overcrowded housing, lack of access to health services, and systemic discrimination. Recent events have shone a light on the tragic legacy of colonialism. We must work to address these difficult issues and move forward on the path of reconciliation, together.

In August, we committed \$107 million for 2021-2022 to provide essential mental health, culture and emotional services to help communities recover from intergenerational trauma. In Budget 2021 we invested \$597.6 million for a distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategy for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation partners, including for the Indian Residential Schools Health Supports Program and Crisis Line and Hope for Wellness Line. This has funded critical initiatives such as the Choose Life Program in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, a suicide-prevention program that provides funding for things like land-based and cultural activities, such as traditional therapeutic land-based healing and detox camps, traditional hunting, fishing, promoting traditional language, medicine preparation, canoeing, skinning and



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preparing wildlife, etc. Initiatives such as these, which are developed with the community, meet people where they are at and help to address the needs of youth in their community.

A re-elected Liberal government will invest an additional \$1.4 billion for a distinctions based mental health and wellness strategy with First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation, expanding on our recent commitment of \$597.6 million, for a total investment of \$2 billion over five years. We understand that this work will take time and will need to be guided by communities, survivors, and their families.

The opioid crisis has worsened over the course of the pandemic and made evident the reality that many people who use substances lack access to the treatment and supports they need to survive and thrive. They often face significant challenges due to stigma, criminalization and structural and racial inequalities. If elected, what specific steps would your party take to comprehensively support people who use substances and what action would your party take to amend federal laws and policies surrounding controlled substances?

Since 2015, the Liberal government has invested more than \$600 million to address the opioid crisis and improve access to treatment, including \$182 million for the Substance and Addictions Program. We are taking an evidence-based approach to the crisis and will continue focusing on safe supply and harm reduction, including through funding to support the MySafe Society safer supply project to operate five sites in four cities across Canada. This innovative project offers a new way to provide medication to people living with opioid use disorder as an alternative to the toxic illegal drug supply and to help prevent overdoses. (March 2021). Sites are located in Vancouver (BC), Victoria (BC), Dartmouth (NS), and London (ON).

We are also focused on ending the stigma and getting people the help they need - we are working with community organizations to support community-based approaches to addressing stigma and supporting families who have lost loved ones to the opioid epidemic. In April 2021, we also announced nearly \$16.5 million for 11 projects to help support communities in British Columbia in their efforts to address and prevent substance use-related harms.

Budget 2021 included an investment of \$40.4M, and \$10M ongoing, to support up to 25 additional drug treatment courts. This funding will provide eligible participants with access to a comprehensive program that includes substance use treatment and social services support.

A re-elected Liberal government will invest \$25 million for additional public education and outreach efforts to reduce stigma surrounding problematic substance use. We will also invest \$500 million to expand access to treatment, using evidence-based approaches, not the abstinence-based approach advocated by the Conservatives. And we will amend the Criminal Code to repeal relevant mandatory minimum penalties and requiring police and Crown prosecutors to consider diverting individuals out of the criminal justice system. We will continue to take an evidence-based approach to treatment and harm



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reduction for Canadians battling problematic substance use, and restore the system that faced constant cuts under the Harper government.