

- 1. 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?**

COVID-19 has taken a tremendous toll on Canadians' mental health. This is especially true for young people who are reporting high levels of depression and anxiety. Even before the pandemic hit, millions of Canadians were suffering with unmet mental health care needs.

A New Democrat government will work in partnership with the provinces and territories to bring mental health services into our public health care system. As a first step, we will implement mental health care for uninsured Canadians – providing immediate access to these urgently-needed supports without cost barriers.

Our universal public pharmacare plan will also extend access to prescription medication for mental health care to all Canadians. We will work with provinces and territories to build on these initiatives and put in place a truly comprehensive approach to mental health services across the country.

- 2. 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?**

The enormous stress placed on our public health care system from years of federal underfunding has become painfully evident throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Decades of cuts and neglect by Liberal and Conservative governments have pushed our system to the brink of collapse.

When Medicare was first established in Canada the federal government agreed to assume half the costs incurred by provinces and territories. However, the federal share of overall health care spending has since plummeted to about 22 percent today. Moreover, with only 7.2 percent of our overall health budget dedicated to mental health care, Canada spends the lowest proportion of funding on mental health among all G7 countries.

A New Democrat government will reverse this trend. In the long-term we will work in full partnership with the provinces and territories to bring mental health care into our public system under the principles of the *Canada Health Act*.

- 3. 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?**

New Democrats are committed to fully implementing the right to housing and ending homelessness in Canada within a decade. We'll partner with provinces and municipalities to create half a million units of affordable housing over the next ten years. This will include supportive housing, community and non-market housing, as well as rental assistance for co-ops. We'll also streamline the application process and provide dedicated fast-start funds to help communities get projects off the ground immediately. Our housing strategy will include measures to support Canadians at risk of becoming homeless, adopting a "housing first" approach. To deliver help to the most vulnerable right away, we'll also work with the provinces and municipalities to fast-track the purchase, lease and conversion of hotels and motels for emergency housing relief until more permanent, community-based solutions are available.

In addition, New Democrats will build towards a guaranteed livable income for all Canadians. We'll start this work immediately by lifting every senior and person living with a disability out of poverty. This will be complimented by bold new investments in child care, health care, post-secondary education and training to set all Canadians up to succeed.

- 4. 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?**

A New Democrat government will work in partnership with Indigenous communities to improve access to mental health care services and treatment for problematic substance use both on and off reserve – including an evidence-based action plan to prevent suicide, backed by dedicated federal resources. We will provide sustainable funding to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools. We recognize that healing the ongoing trauma caused by colonialism and residential schools will require long-term nation to nation partnerships based on Indigenous health self-determination.

- 5. 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**

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substances and what action would your party take to amend federal laws and policies surrounding controlled substances?

Decades of failed drug policy have caused incalculable harm to communities across Canada. In the last five years alone, we have lost over 20,000 loved ones to overdoses. Tragically, this staggering death toll has grown dramatically throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Criminalization, a toxic illicit supply and a lack of timely access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery services are driving this ongoing catastrophe. It's time for a new approach.

Canada's New Democrats have been calling on the federal government to declare the overdose crisis a public health emergency for several years. Upon taking office, we plan to make such a declaration without delay. We will address this crisis with the urgency and dedication it deserves.

A New Democratic government will introduce legislation to decriminalize substance use in Canada and expunge criminal records for possession. We believe that the trauma and stigma caused by the criminalization of people who use drugs cannot be meaningfully addressed with half-measures.

We will work with the provinces and territories to extend low-barrier access to a safe supply of regulated substances to every region of the country. This is essential to save lives. A New Democratic government will also put in place a national strategy to ensure that harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services are available to all those who seek access. We will back up this plan with new and significant investments.

Finally, a New Democratic government will adopt a wholly health-based approach to substance use in Canada. That means moving towards a consistent framework for regulating substances through evidence-based assessments of their potential harms. This would align with the advice of Canada's leading public health experts, including the federal government's Expert Task Force on Substance Use.

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