

Please see below for our party's response to your survey titled: "Share your plan for arthritis prevention, treatment and care in British Columbia".

'BC CITIZENS FIRST' PARTY RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE

What will your government do to bring a high quality, evidence-based model of arthritis care for all BC residents?

- Our party supports arthritis prevention, treatment and care.
- We believe prevention comes from increased education and awareness amongst at risk groups through government sponsored education programs.
- We believe treatment requires a more consistent approach across the province of British Columbia and should not be based on separate approaches by individual and fragmented health authorities. It also requires more specialists employed to help with the many forms of arthritis. We will include arthritis as a specialty for which we will provide free post secondary education scholarships for BC citizens who are prepared to work within BC once they obtain their qualifications.

What will your government do to introduce patient education and exercise programs, such as GLA:D, that have been proven to significantly reduce hip or knee osteoarthritis symptoms?

- As indicated above we will expand community awareness and education programs with additional government funding. This will include support for patient education and exercise programs, such as GLA:D, that have been proven to significantly reduce hip or knee osteoarthritis symptoms using physiotherapist interventions

What will your government do to improve the healthcare and lives of Aboriginals living with arthritis in BC?

- Our party acknowledges that Aboriginal Canadians have some of the highest rates of serious or life threatening arthritis in the world, and are at greater risk for becoming disabled by arthritis. Significant gaps in Aboriginal arthritis care currently exist in BC and we will aim to ensure that all BC Aboriginals have the same equitable access to arthritis care as that provided to non-Aboriginal BC citizens. We will work with the Government of Canada to achieve this outcome over the next 4 years of government.

What will your government do to improve the province's ranking and ensure that BC residents living with arthritis, with the help of the doctors who treat them, are able to choose the medication most appropriate for their specific disease and risk factors?

- We support rapid diagnosis of arthritis and have a policy in place to ensure medical scans are conducted within 4 weeks for all citizens of British Columbia.

- We also support the establishment of a National Prescription Scheme which will dramatically reduce the cost of prescription medicines and at the same time widen the range of prescription medicines available to all Canadians including citizens of BC.
- In the short-term we are prepared to ensure that publicly funded drug formularies based on the number of medically necessary arthritis medications (e.g. biologics, biosimilars and targeted small molecule) see B.C. currently paced equal first place in Canada over the term of the next legislature (i.e. 4 years).

How will your government establish better prevention programs and facilitate flexible work arrangements to help reduce the direct and indirect costs of arthritis to BC employers and the BC economy?

We believe our specific measures outlined in the above responses will deliver better prevention programs and reduce the direct and indirect costs of arthritis to BC employers and the BC economy:

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- We will expand community awareness and education programs with additional government funding. This will include support for patient education and exercise programs, such as GLA:D, that have been proven to significantly reduce hip or knee osteoarthritis symptoms using physiotherapist interventions
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disabled by arthritis. Significant gaps in Aboriginal arthritis care currently exist in BC and we will aim to ensure that all BC Aboriginals have the same equitable access to arthritis care as that provided to non-Aboriginal BC citizens. We will work with the Government of Canada to achieve this outcome over the next 4 years of government.

Will your government take steps to increase the number of rheumatologists and arthritis trained allied health professionals to ensure timely, specialized care for BC patients with arthritis?

- We accept that the economic burden of arthritis is expected to double within a generation and strain the BC health system's ability to provide quality care to BC patients with arthritis.
- We firmly believe our support of fee-free post secondary education scholarships specifically focused on rheumatologists and arthritis trained allied health professionals will significantly increase specialized care for BC patients with arthritis.

Finally, we would like to point out that our Party Leader, Mr. Phillip Ryan (our BC Citizens First Party candidate in Vancouver-False Creek) is a current and past arthritis sufferer and he is fully conversant with the problems associated with the lack of education, the diverse nature of the disease across multiple parts of the human body, the issues of scan delays, restricted access to specialist medical support, current prescription drugs and their side-effects, and treatment regimes. He will carry this knowledge into the Legislature and be a beacon of support for Arthritis sufferers and their support organizations.

Regards,

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