

Questions for BC Liberal candidates

Arthritis, in its many forms, affects almost one out of five British Columbia (BC) residents. To combat this group of over 100 types of disabling and life-threatening diseases, the government must increase its level of awareness and standard of healthcare available.

The majority of arthritis-related hospitalizations is for surgery (day surgery or orthopaedic inpatient); in fact, about a quarter of arthritis-related surgeries are joint replacements.

BC patients with arthritis make up most of those on joint replacement wait lists. More than 90% of people who undergo hip or knee replacement surgery have arthritis – fewer than 10% undergo this procedure for other diseases or injuries, such as hip fracture.

Question 1

- Reliable and valid screening tools to help detect and appropriately diagnose arthritis exist, but have not been introduced in Canada.

How will your government bring basic diagnostic standards to British Columbia?

Question 2

- Although the many forms of arthritis affect more than 560,000 young and old British Columbian consumers, there is no comprehensive model of arthritis healthcare available in BC, and this gap is particularly pronounced outside of the Lower Mainland. Where you live can be more important in determining treatment than how sick you are.

What will your government do to bring a consistent standard of healthcare for arthritis to all of BC?

Question 3

- Aboriginal Canadians have some of the highest rates of serious or life-threatening, disabling arthritis in the world, and are at greater risk for becoming disabled by arthritis. Significant gaps in Aboriginal arthritis healthcare currently exist in BC.

What will your government do to improve the healthcare and lives of Aboriginal British Columbians with arthritis?

Question 4

- People with arthritis are more likely to report reduction of activities at work or not being in the labour force than those without arthritis.
- The economic burden of arthritis in Canada was estimated to be 6.4 billion dollars in 2000 — over one quarter (29%) of the total cost of musculoskeletal diseases. Of the total arthritis-related costs, the greatest impact is due to the indirect costs (\$4.3 billion) which consists of the lost production attributable to long-term disability and premature death versus direct costs (\$2.1 billion) which include hospital, drug, physician and additional healthcare expenditures.
- On average, over a quarter of men and women with arthritis between 25 and 44 years of age in BC were not in the labour force because of their arthritis.

How will your government establish and enact better healthcare guidelines so we can prevent the detrimental impacts of arthritis and related conditions on the economy?