

# ENDING VIOLENCE

## Association of BC

### 2009 BC Provincial Election: Responses from Election Candidates

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*In preparation for the BC Provincial Election on May 12, 2009, EVA BC has prepared a package with detailed questions focused on the current condition of supports to women and children victimized by sexual and domestic violence in BC. We have invited four major parties running for office (BC Conservatives, BC Green Party, BC Liberals and BC NDP) to consider the following questions and offered each party an opportunity to respond to us in writing.*

*Responses from the BC Green Party, BC Liberal Party and BC NDP can be found, in alphabetic order according to party name, below each question.*

#### 1. OVERALL RESPONSE SERVICES

BC should be very proud of the significant progress that has been made over the past three decades in providing a critical social safety net for women who are victims of violence, including specialized Community-Based Victim Services, Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs, Outreach Programs and Transition Houses.

However, services for women have been reporting increasing caseloads and waitlists for many years, which creates stressors on programs and staff. These increases in demand for services also increases women's vulnerability and threatens significant advances made in services for women who are victims of violence. Current levels of funding and services must be increased in order not to further jeopardize women's safety.

#### Question

Should your party be elected will you commit to the following:

- Increased funding for existing Community-Based Victim Services to meet current and growing service pressures, and for additional Community-Based Victim Services in communities without such programs. This would include lowering the community population requirement (currently at 20,000) to be eligible for a Community-Based Victim Service Program;
- Special efforts need to be made to address the needs of young women under 18 who are victims of violence. This includes funding to existing

Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs and training for service providers on the needs of these young women;

- Adequate funding for interpreter services to facilitate immigrant women's and disabled women's access to appropriate community support services;
- Funding to increase the number of Multicultural Outreach programs and to fund Outreach programs for Aboriginal women who are victims of violence;
- Funding for specialized hospital-based responses to domestic and sexual violence, based on existing models in BC.

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

The BC Green Party supports all of these programs. In the Green Book 2009 – 2013, [www.greenparty.bc.ca/greenbook](http://www.greenparty.bc.ca/greenbook) we also call for reinstating and improving funding for women's emergency shelters and transition houses.

### BC Liberal Party:

The BC Liberals understand the devastating impact that crime and violence can have on victims and their families, particularly women and children. We invested \$43 million to assist victims in 2008/09, an increase of 37% over 2002. In 2008, we increased funding for front-line services to crime victims across BC by an average of 22 percent. 156 victim service programs (93 police-based and 63 community-based) provide information, referrals, emotional support and practical assistance to victims of crime, including domestic violence.

Community-based programs serve victims of family and sexual violence, ensuring services are available to people who are afraid or hesitant to report to the police. In 2007/08, victim service programs provided services to approximately 39,000 new clients (victims and/or their family members) across BC. Victim service workers dedicated approximately 361,000 hours of services and volunteers provided over 100,000 hours of service.

### BC NDP:

Yes, the NDP believes that supports for victims of violence in BC need to be strengthened. Carole James and the NDP will work to make the system more accessible with reduced waitlists, expanded services and greater public accountability.

## 2. SERVICES FOR MARGINALIZED WOMEN

Many of the women and children killed or seriously injured in the context of domestic or sexual violence in recent years have been members of marginalized groups, facing particular barriers that make it more difficult for them to access critical support systems. The six Handel children killed by their father in Quatsino in 2002 lived in a very isolated setting. Sherry Charlie, battered to death by her uncle in Port Alberni in 2002, was an aboriginal child. Sherry Heron, killed at Mission Memorial Hospital in 2004, suffered from physical disabilities. Denise Purdy, killed in Nanaimo in 2003; Amandeep Atwal, murdered near Cache Creek in 2003; and Navreet Waraich, Manjit Panghali and Gurjeet Kaur Ghuman, murdered or critically injured in the Surrey/Delta area in 2006 (domestic violence suspected); were all immigrant women. The victims of Robert William Pickton were sex trade workers and drug users, many of whom were Aboriginal women. Most of the women who have been murdered or gone missing on Highway 16 are Aboriginal women.

### Question

New services and initiatives are needed, as well as increased funding to existing community-based services assisting marginalized women and their children to stay safe. These services include accessible and professional translation services, diversity training for justice system personnel, legislative and policy provisions to support pro-active referral to specialized community advocates and adequate funding for groups representing marginalized populations. Funding is also needed for research and education to assist government policy and program decisions. If elected, will you consider funding these critical community based services?

### RESPONSES

#### BC Green Party:

Yes. BC Greens support all of these programs.

#### BC Liberal Party:

The BC Liberal government has increased support for direct essential services by more than 40 per cent since 2005, the largest increase in a decade. \$50 million annually now goes to prevention and intervention initiatives including 24-hour transition house services, and counseling and outreach programs in over 100 communities that connect women with the services they may need. As a result, 95 per cent of women in B.C. now have access to services within an hour of their home.

We also funded Domestic Violence Units in Richmond and Vancouver which involve partner a dedicated police officer and a victim service worker when responding to domestic violence calls.

The BC Liberal government has invested almost \$3.6-million in outreach services – including multicultural outreach services – to help connect women in crisis with supports that can make a real difference in their lives. Women leaving abusive situations who are eligible for income assistance receive support immediately and are exempt from the three-week work search, two-year independence test and time limits. Women who are victims of violent crime can also apply to the Province's Crime Victim Assistance Program for benefits and protective measures.

Budget 2009 provided an additional \$11 million over the next years for the Crime Victim Assistance Program.

### **BC NDP:**

The NDP understands that marginalized groups in society are often more susceptible to experiencing violence and face more barriers to accessing services and support. The NDP will increase outreach services and work to make supports as inclusive as possible.

The NDP has committed to increasing resources for the investigation into the Highway of Tears murders and holding an inquiry into the multiple murders of women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The NDP will also strengthen human rights protections by establishing a Human Rights Commission, and enhancing preventative actions such as community antiracism and discrimination programs, including a provincial anti-hate hotline.

### **3. SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

Canada's history of colonialism and assimilation of Aboriginal people has resulted in lasting discrimination, racism, inequality and violence still felt today in Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal women, both on and off reserve, face high levels of violence and significant barriers to specialized, accessible domestic and sexual violence services. A shortage of support services perpetuates Aboriginal women's experiences of violence.

#### **Question**

If elected, will your party increase the number of funded, Aboriginal specific and culturally based victim support programs in areas with high Aboriginal

populations? In rural areas, will you consider Aboriginal satellite programs or Aboriginal outreach workers attached to programs serving the general population?

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Yes. The Green Party acknowledges the special needs of First Nations people and we support programs to help protect them from violence.

### BC Liberal Party:

The BC Liberal government is funding new services to address the needs of domestic violence victims, Aboriginal peoples and other vulnerable populations. In April, 2008, \$1.5 million was announced for programs to prevent domestic violence and assist its victims, particularly newcomers to Canada. Programs include new domestic violence units, a Domestic Violence Response Needs Assessment Fund, the Provincial Protective Measures Unit, and enhanced victim services for newcomers to Canada.

The Civil Forfeiture Office has returned more than \$1.3 million to community programs since being established by the BC Liberal government in 2005, including programs that use mentoring by elders and culture-based teachings to curb violence and crime in specific Aboriginal communities.

### BC NDP:

The NDP will re-instate the BC Ministry of Women's Equality. One of its main functions will be to ensure all women, including Aboriginal women, have broad access to domestic and sexual violence services.

In addition, the NDP will press the Government of Canada to support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and use it to guide our decision making here in BC.

## 4. GANG VIOLENCE

Gang violence in BC has been at the forefront of most people's mind due to the recent media spotlight on the growing number of gang-related homicides in the last year. While gang violence poses a legitimate threat to the safety of our cities, the media's sensationalizing of the violence may cause people to lose focus on the everyday reality of domestic violence. In 2007, police reported 117 gang-related homicides and 136 family homicides in Canada; both numbers are

devastating and result in life-long emotional trauma, but gang violence dominates our media due to the brazen nature of the crimes. It is important that the Provincial Government does not lose sight of violence against women and children and divert too many of its resources towards gang violence.

Gang violence as an issue is not separate from violence against women but highly related. This type of violence is affecting both the needs of women and the safety of antiviolence workers as well.

## Question

If elected, will your party commit to ensuring that the current focus on gang related violence does not usurp the equally important work in policy development and service provision related to violence against women and children?

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

One of the guiding principles of the Green Party movement is non-violence. Protection of women and children will be the first priority.

In addition, to curb the power of the criminal gangs in BC, the Green Party is calling for an end to prohibition. The Green Party's new "Green Strategy for Substance Use" is an evidence-based, public-health centered approach that will take away power from organized crime without criminalizing those who struggle with addictions. We believe that enforcement can and should play a role in a public health approach to substance use. However, it should be focused on protecting the public from serious crime, rather than on personal substance use.

### BC Liberal Party:

Every British Columbian should be safe in their home and in their community. That means both ensuring that services are available for women and children facing violence and addressing gang violence, which affects individuals and families alike.

On February 13, 2009, Premier Gordon Campbell unveiled our seven point strategy to crack down on gangs and gun crimes. The plan includes 168 more police officers, 26 dedicated prosecutors, more jails and tougher laws and sentences.

In 2006, the BC Liberal government launched a four-year, \$3 million provincial strategy to prevent youth gang violence through education, law enforcement and youth and community partners. This strategy includes the Youth Against Violence

Line – a toll-free, multilingual phone line available to youth 24/7 to report crime or ask for help. The strategy supports the direct efforts of seven local communities in developing community plans to prevent youth gang violence. They will share best practices with other B.C. communities. The BC Liberal government also supported a resource video called “Gangs: Take a Stand,” which talks about ways to prevent gang activity.

The Civil Forfeiture Office, opened by the BC Liberal government in 2005, is an innovative approach which cracks down on serious crimes and fund victims and crime prevention program. A significant portion of the proceeds of the sale of assets seized by the Office is granted to community groups dedicated to victims and crime prevention. More than \$1.3 million has been returned.

**BC NDP:**

Yes. We will ensure that a strong message is sent, through words and by our actions, that dealing with violence against women and children is a key priority for an NDP government.

**5. SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY**

Due to the prevalence of sexual assault, the very low reporting rate, its long-term impacts on victims and the high cost to society, it is crucial that the justice system places a high priority on developing effective responses to sexual assault, including a cross ministry policy. The justice system’s *Violence Against Women and Children Policy* was intended as an overarching policy to guide police and other justice system responses to domestic and sexual violence. However, despite years of work by inter-ministry committees, the *Sexual Assault* components of this policy were never implemented.

**Question**

If elected, will you commit to updating and implementing the *Sexual Assault Policy* and support specialized training for all justice, health and social services personnel on the dynamics of sexual assault?

**RESPONSES**

**BC Green Party:**

Yes, and the Green Party will implement a yearly review of the efficacy of the program.

### **BC Liberal Party:**

The BC Liberal government recognizes the need to address the response of the justice system to violence against women. That's why we supported the development of the Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy (VAWIR). The Victims Services Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General works with criminal justice system and community partners to effectively implement the policy to be more responsive and to improve safety for women. The VAWIR directs the justice system to emphasize the criminality of violence within relationships and to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of women and children who may be at risk.

### **BC NDP:**

The NDP understands the importance of ensuring that the justice system is well equipped to address the needs of victims of sexual assault. We will review the Violence Against Women and Children Policy to determine necessary next steps.

## **6. CRISIS SUPPORT AND RESPONSE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS**

Trauma caused by sexual assault can affect a survivor's long-term ability to have relationships or gain and maintain employment due to an accompanying loss of self-esteem, sense of safety and trust, or the presence of debilitating symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder<sup>1</sup> and generally decreased mental health.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 2000, Stats Canada revealed that over 24,000 sexual assaults were reported to police in Canada. An extrapolation based on the victimization rate (only 6% of sexual assaults ever get reported to the police in Canada), reveals an estimated total for sexual assaults in that year alone to be over 400,000 women. A similar extrapolation of victimization rates of 2003 figures for BC indicate that the 3,700 sexual assaults reported to police in BC represented only 6% of an estimated 61,000 sexual assaults committed during that period.

In March 2003, government funding was cut to all of BC's Sexual Assault/Women Assault Centres providing crisis support and counselling to women who were

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<sup>1</sup> PTSD symptoms include: re-experiencing trauma in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive symptoms and exaggerated emotional and physical reactions to triggers that remind the person of the trauma, emotional numbing and avoidance of activities or places that remind the individual of the trauma and symptoms like difficulty sleeping, hypervigilance, irritability and exaggerated startle response.

<sup>2</sup> Cascardi, O'Leary, & Schlee, 1999; Herman, 1992; Mouton, Rovi, Furniss, & Lasser, 1999 as cited in The Dollars and Cents Case for Increased Stopping the Violence Counselling, Training and Community Coordination for Women's Safety, BCASVACP

victimized by sexual violence. Many of these services also provided emergency accompaniment to police and hospitals. These services were replaced only with daytime emotional support and a 1-800 number located in Vancouver. Each of these programs lost an average of \$100,000 in annual core funding and the counselling services they provided ceased to exist.

### **Question**

If elected, will you support the development of a province-wide initiative to ensure that each community in BC has funded crisis and emergency responses for sexual assault?

### **RESPONSES**

#### **BC Green Party:**

Yes, BC Greens will reinstate the funding to the women's programs that were cut and we support the implementation of new programs to help sexual assault survivors. We will also mandate yearly reviews of the programs to ensure that women are getting the help that they need.

#### **BC Liberal Party:**

The BC Liberal government has established a cross government panel of senior officials from several ministries, including Attorney General, Children and Family Development, Education, Healthy Living and Sport, and Housing and Social Development to develop an integrated, cross-ministry strategy to address violence against women.

#### **BC NDP:**

Yes, the NDP believes that women should have access to services, regardless of where they live and will support the development of a province-wide strategy.

## **7. LOW WAGES FOR ANTI-VIOLENCE SECTOR WORKERS**

Chronically low wages for workers in the anti-violence sector have led to high turnover, stress and job dissatisfaction. Many who work in the anti-violence sector do so because of their passion to work towards equality and healing for women. This does not mean that their work should be under-valued. It is ironic to have practitioners in the mental health system refer to the "specialists" in the anti-violence sector to work with the most traumatized women in our communities, and to see those who are considered the specialists be so under-

valued in terms of compensation and benefits.

### **Question**

Do you believe that anti-violence sector workers deserve a competitive wage that reflects their experience and is on par with others in the counselling field? What would you be prepared to do about this?

### **RESPONSES**

#### **BC Green Party:**

As with any profession, there should be standards. The workers involved will be encouraged to set up their own professional association to determine their specific needs.

#### **BC Liberal Party:**

The BC Liberals recognize and greatly appreciate the hard work that front line victims' services workers do when helping families cope with the effects of crime and violence and the resulting mental and emotional strain on the workers themselves. In 2008, the BC Liberal government increased funding per full-time-equivalent position (FTE) for victims' services workers by 16% for all programs. In addition, each FTE received a worker care supplement of up to \$750 to help address vicarious trauma endured in the course of their work.

#### **BC NDP:**

The NDP recognizes the critical services provided by anti-violence workers in our community. We will consult with sector organizations regarding the fairness of current wage levels.

## **8. VICTIM SURCHARGE SPECIAL ACCOUNT**

Services for women and children who are victims of violence struggle with significant service pressures. Many programs have only one part-time staff person, and many communities have no Community-Based Victim Services at all. Over \$40 million has accumulated in the Victim Surcharge Special Account, earmarked specifically for initiatives to address the needs of victims of crime. Over the 15 years that this fund has been accumulating, very little of the funds have been spent on increasing community services. The millions in this fund would go a long way towards meeting the urgent needs of women who are victims of violence.

## Question

If elected, will your party put the Victim Surcharge Special Account to work to meet the urgent needs (as outlined by the anti-violence sector) of women who are victims of violence?

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Yes.

### BC Liberal Party:

The Victim Surcharge Fine was created to fund victim service programs and initiatives that provide much needed support and assistance to victims of crime and their families. In 2008, the BC Liberal government announced that an additional \$17 million over three years from this account will be spent to enhance front-line services and support to victims of crime and their families. The funding has been used to increase funding for front-line victims services and to address the unique needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations, including services for victims of family and sexual violence.

### BC NDP:

The NDP has committed to increasing funding for services for victims of crimes. We will look at a variety of funding options to achieve this goal.

## 9. PROTECTION ORDERS

Protection orders are court orders containing a condition to provide safety and security to one or more named people. These include *Criminal Code* orders such as s.810 recognizances (peace bonds), probation and bail orders, civil restraining orders under the *Family Relations Act* or the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)* and protective intervention orders under the *CFCSA*. In domestic violence cases, a high degree of risk is associated with actual or potential breaches of court-ordered protective conditions such as no-contact orders. Any reported breach must be dealt with as a high-risk situation for victims and others associated with the victim, with an immediate enforcement response required because of the significant risk of escalating violence. The tragic deaths of Sherry Heron and her mother at Mission Memorial Hospital in 2004 illustrates this risk in stark terms. The lack of escalating consequences to address the escalating violence exacerbates this risk.

## Question

If elected, would you and your party ensure strong leadership and develop a coordinated, cross-sectoral strategy involving the justice, health, social services and education systems, to ensure effective utilization and enforcement of justice and MCFD protection orders, including:

- Proactive investigation and prosecution, with escalating consequences for reported breaches;
- Inclusion of clearly worded enforcement clauses in all protection orders;
- Coordinated information sharing about risk factors and protective conditions, and the provision of information to victims.

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Most definitely.

### BC Liberal Party:

The BC Liberal government is providing strong leadership. The Ministry of Children and Family Development is coordinating the care of children across various ministries to ensure the highest levels of protection and care, including:

- Closer monitoring of their progress in school in collaboration with the Ministry of Education;
- Up to \$1 million in new annual funding for community-based crime prevention programs aimed at reaching at-risk youth before they become involved in crime;
- Implementation of a 5 year child and youth mental health plan that focuses on both prevention and treatment and which doubled the funding for these important services; and
- The establishment of the Agreements with Young Adults Program to help meet their educational and rehabilitative needs.

For those who are involved with youth justice there are a variety of community-based services and supports in place which include:

- Intensive support and supervision programs;
- Substance abuse treatment programs;
- Youth forensic psychiatric services; and
- Restorative justice programs.

**BC NDP:**

The NDP understands the importance of ensuring that protective orders are a strong legal tool. We will explore all avenues available to increase their effectiveness.

**10. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE (DVDRC)**

The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee provides a model for a DVDRC for BC. It is a multi-disciplinary expert advisory committee that assists the Chief Coroner to investigate and review deaths that occur as result of domestic violence in order to identify systemic issues and shortcomings and make recommendations to help prevent future deaths. It maintains a comprehensive database on domestic homicide offenders, victims and their circumstances; helps to identify trends, risk factors and patterns in order to recommend strategies for intervention and prevention; reports annually to increase public education; and conducts appropriate research.

Another model for a DVDRC exists in Santa Clara County, California. In this approach, the Department of Justice asked the County's Domestic Violence Council to create a DVDRC to review all domestic violence related deaths, identify any gaps in the system and recommend appropriate systemic changes. The DVDRC includes all system-based and community-based organizations dealing with domestic violence victims, offenders and their children.

**Question**

If elected, would you establish a Domestic Violence Death Review Committee for BC based on one of the models already in use in Canada or the US, including experts from community-based anti-violence organizations? Any model utilized must take account of factors particularly affecting marginalized groups, especially including cultural and immigration factors, and document demographic trends.

**RESPONSES**

**BC Green Party:**

Yes. The Green Party promotes local decision-making and inclusivity.

**BC Liberal Party:**

The British Columbia Coroners' Service is an independent body charged with investigating all unnatural, sudden and unexpected, unexplained or unattended deaths. It makes recommendations to improve public safety and prevent death in

similar circumstances. The BC Liberal government increased the Coroners' Service budget by \$13 million to enhance its capacity. In 2007, the BC Liberal government modernized the 30 year old *Coroner's Act* to increase transparency and accountability. The changes resulted in greater authority for coroners to conduct and control investigations and inquests.

### **BC NDP:**

The NDP will evaluate innovative models being implemented in other jurisdictions to assess their value in BC.

## **11. LEGAL AID AND RELATED FAMILY LAW SERVICES**

While insufficient levels of legal aid adversely affect all abused women who are dealing with family law matters, some groups are particularly disadvantaged. These include:

- Immigrant women, particularly those who do not speak English, who may be unfamiliar with the justice system and available services, and in addition to family law issues, may have legal issues relating to immigration or sponsorship;
- Aboriginal women who, in addition to family law issues, may have legal issues relating to their Aboriginal status, housing and, in some cases, may have low literacy levels;
- Women in rural areas who, in addition to limitations faced by all abused women dealing with family law issues, often face a lack of family lawyers in their community, as well as difficulties getting to court because of a lack of transportation, particularly since recent court closures.

While innovative strategies undertaken by Legal Services Society, such as web-based resources, Law Line, training for family law advocates and piloting of "Family Justice Information Hubs" are potentially useful resources, they do not resolve the central problem of the need for more legal representation for abused women—and particularly marginalized women—dealing with family law matters.

### **Question**

If elected, would you and your party enhance legal aid coverage for representation in both Provincial and Supreme Court for women who are victims of domestic violence, particularly for marginalized communities including Aboriginal women, immigrant women and women living in poverty?

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Yes. All legal aid programs would be reinstated and enhanced to include the needs of family law cases.

### BC Liberal Party:

The BC Liberal government funded the Legal Services Society \$65.3 million to provide civil and criminal legal aid in 2008/09 – an increase of 19% over the past five years. In 2008/09, the BC Liberal government spent \$29.9 million on access to justice services above and beyond the funding we provide to the legal aid program, including services that enhanced mediation and dispute resolution. We took steps to ensure that legal representation for family disputes is available to eligible clients in emergency situations, including clients in financial need where the Province is seeking custody of a child.

### BC NDP:

The BC NDP has committed to enhancing legal services for family and community law.

## 12. AMENDMENTS TO THE *FAMILY RELATIONS ACT*

The Ministry of the Attorney General is in the process of considering amendments to the *Family Relations Act*, including amendments, which would more effectively address violence experienced by women and children in the context of family breakdown.

### Question

If elected, will your party support amendments to the *Family Relations Act*, specifically designed to better protect women and children from domestic violence in the family law context, including:

- Provisions that define family violence consistent with existing definitions contained in the Ministry of Attorney General's *Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy*;
- Provisions which provide clear legislative authority for police and Crown counsel to vigorously enforce and prosecute any reported breaches of civil restraining orders in the *Family Relations Act*;

- Provisions that ensure information about known risk factors already identified by other sectors, including the criminal courts and child welfare, is available to family court judges and that it is not a woman's responsibility to bring this information forward to the court.

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Yes, we would support all of these provisions.

### BC Liberal Party:

The Ministry of Attorney General, along with other justice, health and social service ministries, has embarked on a three-year plan to ensure the justice system meets the needs of individuals, families, businesses and communities in a more effective, timely and meaningful way. Reforms are built around the concept of early solutions and faster justice.

### BC NDP:

The BC NDP understands the importance of preventing violence, including that which takes place within families. We will continue the process of reviewing the Family Relations Act with a mind to strengthening it.

## 13. ALTERNATIVE MEASURES IN SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES

BC is one of the only provinces to allow Alternative Measures in sexual assault cases (a process that allows an offender to be provided with an alternative to being prosecuted). There is currently no research to show that use of Alternative Measures in sexual assault cases is safe for victims. The outcome is that sex offences are less likely than other violent offences to result in charges against a suspect and adults charged with sex offences are less likely than other violent offenders to be found guilty (Kong et al 2003).

### Question

Are you in favour of amending the Crown policy to disallow Alternative Measures in sexual assault cases? Alternatively, will you commit to making the results of this policy transparent, i.e. providing information about program evaluation, victim satisfaction, etc.?

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Yes, BC Greens are in favour of the amendment and we are committed to a transparent policy.

### BC Liberal Party:

The Criminal Justice Branch is an independent body charged with the prosecution of criminal cases in British Columbia. Their decisions are made separate from government in order to preserve the integrity of the justice system.

### BC NDP:

The NDP will review the present policy of allowing alternative measures in sexual assault cases.

## 14. ASSAULTIVE MEN'S TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Treatment for assaultive men is an essential element of an effective, coordinated response to domestic violence. Due to the recurring nature of domestic and sexual violence, early intervention and treatment works to prevent violence by changing the attitudes, values, behaviors and social conditions that allow violence to occur. Assaultive men's treatment programs lack the funding they need in order to make treatment accessible for non court-mandated men. Increased funding needs to be provided to programs for voluntary men in order to change abusive behavior patterns before the abuser is charged or convicted of an offence.

### Question

If elected, will you commit to providing funding for assaultive men's treatment programs for non court-mandated men? Will you support the development and implementation of domestic violence training for other treatment services assaultive men are likely to access, including addiction services, Aboriginal justice services and mental health services?

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Yes, we support funding for all of these programs.

### **BC Liberal Party:**

The BC Liberal government provides funding to assaultive men's treatment programs run by community organizations. The BC Corrections Branch runs programs to assist men to deal with family violence issues. Culturally appropriate programs have been put in place for Aboriginal men.

The BC Liberal government spent more than \$1.2 billion annually on mental health and addictions, an increase of more than 42% since 2001.

### **BC NDP:**

The NDP will review current eligibility and funding levels for the assaultive men's treatment program.

## **15. TRAINING**

The area of violence against women is a complex one: the legal and policy landscape is often challenging and frequently changing. Responses are required from a broad range of sectors, coordination of both services and information sharing is key and the stakes are high—the lives of women and their children are often at risk. While some discipline-specific training on violence against women is clearly appropriate, it is important to recognize the particular value of inter-sectoral training that trains together those sectors that are expected to work together, such as police, Crown, victim services, counselling services, shelters, child protection, hospitals and other health care agencies, including community health, mental health and addictions services.

### **Question**

If elected, will your party support all sectors, including police, Crown, corrections, court services, the judiciary, victim support services, child protection, MCS and health care, taking formal steps to ensure that training on violence against women:

- Is adequately funded for both system-based staff and community service programs and is built into budgets on an ongoing basis, using Victim Surcharge Special Account funds as appropriate;
- Focuses on the risks associated to victims and service providers and supplies service providers with consistent tools and direction on risk assessment and safety planning;

- Is delivered in basic post employment training and as well in the colleges, universities and professional schools that train future service providers and responders to violence against women;
- Is developed and delivered cross-sectorally, wherever appropriate, and involves those who will be expected to work together, including community-based service providers;
- Stresses the importance of proactive coordination and collaborative working relationships *as a key safety issue*;
- Incorporates a diversity analysis and involves representatives of diversity groups;
- Includes a gender analysis and an analysis of power-based crimes.

## RESPONSES

### BC Green Party:

Yes, the Green Party supports all of these programs.

### BC Liberal Party:

The BC Liberal government has developed training materials for police, Crown and victim service workers. For example, Police Services Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is coordinating a Domestic Violence and Domestic Violence Risk Assessment eLearning initiative that will be accessible to all B.C. police officers. The Ministry has also supported the Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy (VAWIR) and is working with criminal justice system and community partners to effectively implement the policy to be more responsive and to improve safety for women.

### BC NDP:

Yes.

## 16. SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The lack of safe and affordable housing across BC is having a severe impact on women in abusive relationships, including:

- Many women stay in abusive relationships rather than risk being homeless;
- Some women are forced to move into crowded, unsanitary or unsafe situations;

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- Women move often in their search for stable housing;
- Women are forced to leave their communities in order to find housing;
- Women stay with friends and family—not only is this often an untenable situation, but many women in this situation are not put on the priority list for BC Housing (only women in transition houses are);
- Women staying in temporary lodgings may find it difficult to get rent receipts, thus complicating applications for BC Housing or income assistance;
- Women may engage in survival sex to secure housing;
- Women are less able to access counselling and support services when they do not have stable housing.

### Question

How will your party establish affordable long-term housing options for women who are seeking safety?

### RESPONSES

#### BC Green Party:

The Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) will replace all existing income assistance programs. The rate will be based on the cost of living and other factors. The GLI is socially progressive because it ensures a higher basic amount without placing difficult barriers. Everyone will have access to the GLI. This benefits women who need the financial freedom to leave a violent spouse and set up their own home without having to endure embarrassing or confusing bureaucratic applications or having to rely on friends or family who may not be able to fully help them.

Since we do not have one currently, BC Greens will establish a provincial housing program that works with municipalities to build affordable housing or to purchase existing housing that can be moved into permanent rental housing. Public land will be retained for non-market housing that cannot be sold for private interests. We will also work with the federal government and other provincial/territorial governments in order to create a national social housing program. Women who need long-term housing will have more options for housing.

#### BC Liberal Party:

The BC Liberal government's comprehensive housing strategy, *Housing Matters BC*, aims to improve the lives of British Columbians facing housing challenges

and to ensure that every British Columbian has access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing today and into the future.

*Housing Matters* has six strategies, one of which is that priority access to housing is given to vulnerable British Columbians, including women and children fleeing abusive relationships. There are 63 provincially-funded transition houses in BC, all of which provide 24-hour staffing and support. Women and children who leave their homes as a result of abuse now have immediate access to services.

The BC Liberal government has allocated \$47.7 million for women and children leaving violence, up by more than \$20 million from 2001. \$35 million is for transitional housing, including outreach services, and \$12.7 million is for counseling for women and their children affected by violence. Last year, approximately 13,000 women and their children were served by the transition house program.

Second Stage Houses provide longer-term housing, up to 18 months, following a stay in transition houses or safe homes.

Women and children staying in transition homes also receive priority access to long-term social housing through the Priority Placement Program. A counselor connects women with support programs, checks in regularly to ensure their safety, and provides referrals to help them build healthy lives.

### **BC NDP:**

The BC NDP has committed to creating 2400 new social housing units in the first year of our mandate, with 1200 units per year thereafter. A portion of these units will be devoted to women seeking safety.