



## 2019 Provincial Election Questionnaire

### HEALTHCARE

**Access to women-centred healthcare services are limited and geographically challenging throughout NL.**

**How will you work to increase comprehensive women-centred healthcare services in this province?**

#### **Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:**

As a government, we are proud of the actions we have taken to increase women-centered healthcare services in our province.

In alignment with recommendations by Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization, our government expanded the province's publicly-funded vaccination program to include the HPV vaccine for boys. The HPV vaccine is now available to all Grade 6 children in the province. HPV can lead to a variety of cancers and the HPV vaccine can help prevent HPV-related diseases or cancers if received at a young age, cervical cancer being the most common HPV-associated cancer. Immunization can prevent more than 70 to 84 per cent of certain cancers and 60 to 90 per cent of high-risk pre-cancer cervical lesions.

We enacted *Access to Abortion Services Regulations* under the authority of the *Access to Abortion Services Act*, which allows for the creation of safe access zones around health care facilities and the homes of health professionals and clinic owners providing abortion services in the province. The regulations ensure that an access zone is established for the residence of every staff member of the Athena Health Centre and that the zone includes the land on which the residence is located and an area that extends out 160 metres from the boundaries of that land.

Also, access zones will be up to a maximum of 50 metres around facilities, fixed at 160 metres around doctors' residences and 10 metres around doctors' offices. The legislation creates an offence with fines up to \$10,000 and allows the Supreme Court to

grant an injunction to restrict a person or group from holding a protest within these zones.

We also began providing universal coverage for Mifegymiso, commonly known as the abortion pill, in Newfoundland and Labrador, providing a no-cost alternative to surgically induced abortions. Removing this cost barrier in primary care will help ensure that women living in rural and remote communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador have more equitable access to an essential medical service.

Recognizing the devastating effects of smoking, we continue with our “Helping Women Live Smoke-Free” initiative. Over 100 staff have received training in 25 Family Resource Centres throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 2018, our government, in conjunction with Eastern Health, announced the opening of a dedicated four-bed inpatient eating disorder unit at the Health Sciences Centre. The unit provides assessment and specialized treatment for those who are acutely ill with an eating disorder and therefore too unwell to participate in outpatient programming. In addition to the beds, there is also a space for meals as well as space for families to participate in the treatment plan and support their family member. While eating disorders are not confined to women and girls, research indicates they comprise the majority of those struggling with such disorders.

We recognize that the introduction of regulated midwifery services in the province will bring significant value to the health care system and expectant mothers, and we are establishing the first location in Gander with a team of three full-time registered midwives. Budget 2019 commits \$370,000 to offer midwifery services for expecting families starting in Gander this spring.

**Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:**

There is no greater priority in our province than health care. The province spends just over \$3 billion on health care, which is 38 percent of the total provincial budget. Health care costs are escalating across the country, but Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest per-capita spending of any province. While health care costs are increasing, unfortunately, the province continues to have some of the highest rates of chronic disease and poorest health outcomes. Newfoundland and Labrador spends more on intervention than on prevention. This is not good practice.

This province deserves a health care system whose focus is a healthy population; a health care system that is centred on quality, accessibility, sustainability and reliability. A Crosbie government will focus on a health care system that is designed to keep people

healthy, not simply react when they become sick. A Crosbie government will not cut health care expenditures. That means we must promote and invest in healthy living initiatives that will ultimately achieve better outcomes. We must ensure that we are using the \$3 billion of resources assigned to health care in the most efficient and results-oriented manner possible. To those ends, we must engage in productive, meaningful conversations with care providers as well as health care consumers to learn from the experience of those front-line health workers and those who depend on the care provided.

The Ball Liberals have not attempted to improve the health care system in any way. We know that, because our health outcomes have not improved.

A Crosbie government will establish the Premier's Task Force on Health Care to work with all health care stakeholders including residents, frontline workers, health care providers and health care administrators, with a mandate to improve the way health care is delivered in this province. The Task Force will be, not top-down, but consultative. It will bring a level of independence and a broad perspective on the best practices in the country.

One of the reasons for the poor outcomes of so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is the conditions in which they live. Social enterprises such as the Gathering Place serve many people who have few options in life. Many find it difficult to make choices that are in the best long-term interests of their health. In terms of housing, nutrition and medical care, they are not living as healthy as they want to be or ought to be living. Many who end up in the health care system are in poorer shape and have poorer outcomes because their circumstances have not been conducive to healthy living. They pay in terms of the quality of their lives; however, we all pay, fiscally and morally, when we allow these circumstances to continue. We need a poverty reduction strategy that lifts people out of dire circumstances and promotes wellness. We also need a lens on our health care system to identify problems like this and find solutions.

We will change the Medical Transportation system to allow 100 per cent reimbursement of travel for people who have to travel for medical reasons outside their region. One of the barriers to accessing health care services for many rural residents of the province is the cost of travel. As a result, patients may be unable to avail of medical care when they need it. We must ensure every patient, no matter where they live, receives timely and affordable care.

We will introduce an "accountable care model" to give people better access to physicians and other care providers. This delivery model will see the development of

primary healthcare teams of physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and dietitians, etc. An accountable care model will encourage care providers to be innovative in the way they deliver care as a team. For example, team members may offer after-hours and weekend clinics, thereby reducing Emergency Room visits. Health care teams that show systemic cost savings will be able to reinvest a portion of those savings into their practices. In addition, innovative care plans provided through the health team may realize savings for the health care system (e.g., fewer hospital admissions, fewer ER visits), which can then be reinvested into the primary health care team, or to develop more programs.

We will make better use of innovation by utilizing virtual care technologies allowing patients to access appropriate care in any region of the province. Virtual care will enable patients to access a health care provider via technology. This eliminates the stress of travel and lowers the costs to patients. Procedures and regulations will be developed with physicians and other care providers who have the expertise to ensure prudent development and implementation of this care model.

We will work with the NL Medical Association, the NL Nurses' Union and other professional organizations to recruit and retain the physicians, nurses and other health care providers required in all regions of the province. We will modernize the fee structure so it is flexible enough to cover innovative arrangements for service delivery by multidisciplinary health care teams. Changes will enable professionals to work to their scope of practice to improve patient access and outcomes.

We will develop a more robust return-of-service agreement structure for graduating physicians of the Memorial University Medical School and provide attractive reimbursement packages for those who choose to practise in the province, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

To ensure patients have access to a robust and appropriate team of health care providers, we will work with Memorial University's School of Medicine to ensure that specialty training offerings match the province's needs.

We will collaborate with the NL Medical Association, the NL Nurses' Union and other health care providers in their efforts to support the health and wellness of physicians and nurses.

We will improve telehealth so patients can have better access to health care providers. By adapting the rules regarding provider payment for telemedicine consultations, we will reduce the travel costs for patients and the cost burden to the system.

We will explore cost-effective options for access to in vitro fertilization.

We will conduct a base staff level review of all nursing homes in the province.

As our population ages, the Quality Health Council will work with communities to ensure the long-term care capacity of the province is better able to meet the need.

We will reverse the decision of the Liberals that restricts seniors' access to personal care homes. Currently, assessors are obligated to strictly enforce a policy that requires applicants to have a physical care need – and sometimes more than one care need – to qualify for admission to a personal care home. Mental wellness issues such as depression, loneliness, fear and anxiety do not qualify as acceptable care needs on their own. This is a very regressive and regrettable step in the provision of mental health care in this province. It is well documented that mental health affects physical health. Today, many seniors, who would have previously qualified for admission are being turned away. Personal care home beds are lying empty while needy seniors are awaiting assessments. There is much evidence to support that the intervention of personal care homes can defer or even eliminate the need for the more expensive long-term care option.

We will restore the dignity and independence of seniors and allow them to have a voice in choosing the best care for their needs. We will engage the Seniors' Advisory Council differently and more effectively by involving them in the "health in all policies" approach.

We will establish a provincial palliative care team to guide health care providers in making decisions about the most appropriate care options for end-of-life patients. All changes will be monitored and evaluated as they are being implemented.

We will develop a community residential hospice/end of life care model. We will learn from the experiences of other provinces that have led on end-of-life hospice care. As a start, we will work with the proponents of the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor in their efforts to establish a hospice, and based on learnings from this initiative, look to support others like it throughout the province.

**Newfoundland and Labrador New Democratic Party:**

We need to expand the network of primary health care teams in community health centres around the province, and make sure they all women-centred services.

The NDP would also increase Planned Parenthood's budget so they can expand their services.

**NL Alliance:**

Like many other issues, Health care in this context is part of a larger scope of healthcare in the province in general. We feel that specialized health care for women is vital, and should be provided through all available means. However that can sometimes pose a challenge.

In areas where specialized medicine and services aren't available, we need to ensure that general services are provided to as large a population as possible. We need to utilize Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses and Pharmacists to provide health care services in the absence of a specialized practitioner.