



BUILDING ON A
STRONGER
NOVA SCOTIA

Question 1:

The Canadian Medical Association Journal published research in 2014 that showed one in twelve Canadians report they skip doses or decide not to fill prescriptions because of cost.

If elected to government, what will your party do to make prescription medications more affordable?

During our mandate, The Liberal Government made changes to the Seniors Pharmacare Program that saw seniors pay less co-pay each time they went to the pharmacy to fill their prescription. The co-pay amount was reduced from 30% to 20%; to a maximum co-pay of \$382 per year. This change also resulted in 12,000 fewer seniors paying no premium at the time of the change (\$424 savings) and 29,000 seniors saw a reduced premium.

Strong pharmacare programs are an important part of the healthcare system. A re-elected Liberal Government will continue to ensure Nova Scotians will have access to the drugs they need by:

- Working with other Atlantic provinces to explore an Atlantic Pharmacare model with the intent of developing an approach that sets an example for the rest of the country, one of our first areas of focus will be to come up with a way to address gaps in coverage for oral cancer and other chronic disease medications.
- Continuing to ensure no premium increases in the Seniors Pharmacare Program.



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Question 2:

Healthcare is the number four issue (behind education, labour relations and balanced books) on the minds of Nova Scotian voters.

If elected:

How will your government improve the delivery of cancer care and other healthcare services in Nova Scotia?

A re-elected Liberal Government will work with health care providers, community health boards and the public to finalize new provincial health service plans, starting with primary care, critical care, mental health and addictions, orthopaedics, **cancer care** and pediatrics.

The goal is to use the best evidence and engage Nova Scotians to create an accessible health system that offers the right care, in the right place at the right time.

A re-elected Liberal Government will create or expand more than 70 collaborative teams, so Nova Scotians can receive the care they need when they need it from their primary health care providers. These teams of doctors, nurse practitioners, family practice nurses and other health care professionals will help better treat chronic diseases and their goal will be to offer same-day or next-day appointments.

A re-elected Liberal Government will also help doctors interested in using video to consult with patients through a new \$750,000 fund. This will help physicians take on more patients and making access more convenient for patients, especially those who may have difficulty leaving their home.

A new Liberal Government will also work with the Nova Scotia Health Authority, Doctors Nova Scotia and Dalhousie University to expand our specialist residency program. A re-elected Liberal Government will add 15 new specialist residency positions to the existing 45 that are already in place. We will focus on specialties of greatest need. Radiation Oncology is one of the speciality residency programs at Dalhousie University.

In addition to the above initiatives, a re-elected Liberal Government will:

- Enable Doctors who are practicing on their own to have the flexibility to choose how and where they practice.
- Transform the locum program to avoid unnecessary closures of small emergency rooms.
- Work with doctors to speed up implementation of myhealthNS personal health record; a web based solution that allows patients to easily view lab results, book appointments and consult with physicians.
- Enhance the family residency program by adding 10 new spaces; create a new practice ready assessment program that will add 10 new spaces for internationally trained physicians and adjust the tuition relief program to expand the number of communities that would be eligible for physicians applying for this program. Physician resource planning is telling us we need approximately 50 new physicians every year and these additional 20 spaces coupled with the already existing 36 residency seats will put **56 new family physicians** into our communities each year.

A re-elected Liberal Government will work with the NSHA and IWK to also institute a new Patient, Family and Caregiver Advisory Council to better understand patients and patient experiences in the health system. The council will advise government, the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK on health policy priorities that will help make the system more responsive, transparent and accountable.

We will also ensure the NSHA board meets at least once a year in each of the four management zones so all areas of the system can provide input on decision making.

b) Will your government restructure healthcare delivery, and if so, how?

For too long, our province had relied on nine different DHA's with nine different ways of doing things. This led to inequitable service across the province and even worse, artificial barriers to accessing services. The Liberal Government restructured health care delivery during this mandate.

We now have a strong unified health care system; one that spends less on administration (\$6 million less annually) and focuses on front-line care. Over the past four years more money than ever has gone to hiring doctors, nurse practitioners and other clinicians, and addressing waitlists. MRI wait times are down and there is virtually no wait for home care services. The long-term care waitlist is almost 50% smaller and people can now access services anywhere in the province; and they are choosing to do so. The NSHA and IWK are efficiently implementing evidence-based decisions and planning for the entire province. They help people get care faster by providing mobility and utilizing all our health resources.

c) How will your government ensure that cancer patients receive the services they need, including home care, financial assistance during recovery and for long-term side effects of cancer and/or treatment?

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The goal is to use the best evidence and engage Nova Scotians to create an accessible health system that offers the right care, in the right place at the right time.

The Liberal Government has invested an additional \$64 million into home care since 2013. A new Liberal Government will continue to expand the supports in the home so that no Nova Scotians are left waiting for support.

Some Nova Scotians, and we hope it would be many, many years post treatment, may require palliative care. A new Liberal Government will develop a Provincial Hospice Program beginning with Halifax, Kentville and Cape Breton. During our mandate, we developed new provincial standards to work with hospice societies to develop options in other parts of the province.

Question 3:

If elected to government, will you commit to ensuring that all cancer patients in Nova Scotia receive timely access to medications at the time they need it?

Government covers oral cancer drugs through four different pharmacare programs (Seniors Pharmacare, Family Pharmacare, Drug Assistance Program for Cancer Patients and Community Services Pharmacare Program). In 2016-17, the total amount spent through each of these publicly funded on oral cancer drugs was close to \$11 million.

Most patients who rely on these public drug programs to access coverage for oral cancer medications have low or no out of pocket costs. We do know there are some who experience some financial hardship and a re-elected Liberal Government will work to address the gaps in coverage.

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- Continuing to ensure no premium increases in the Seniors Pharmacare program.

Question 4:

If elected, how will your government ensure that all Nova Scotians have access to a health-care provider?

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