

May 14, 2018

Jackie Manthorne
President and CEO
Canadian Cancer Survivor Network

Dear Ms. Manthorne,

Thank you for reaching out on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network (CCSN) – and by extension, cancer patients and survivors as well as their families and friends who have also been affected. We also thank you for the important work your network is doing in advocating for the highest standard of care, support, follow up, and quality of life for cancer patients and survivors.

The reality is that more Ontarians are living with cancer than ever before, with an estimated 86,000 new diagnoses each year. The good news is that therapies and outcomes are improving every day. Although cancer is still the leading cause of death in Ontario, the chances of survival are increasing with every new medical advancement.

Too often, however, we are not making the most of those advances. For example, innovative new therapies allow cancer patients to take medication orally at home, instead of having to visit the hospital for lengthy IV treatments. Unfortunately, unlike in-hospital IV treatments, the cost of the oral medication is not covered.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Every patient battling cancer deserves to know their government is completely behind them in their fight.

New Democrats strongly believe that everyone diagnosed with cancer should have timely access to cancer care and essential medical services as well as access to emergency rooms and the treatment and medications they need.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will publicly fund take-home cancer medication. We will also remove the stressful application barriers and delays for drug coverage that have plagued the Trillium Drug Program. We will work with Cancer Care Ontario, CCSN, health care professionals, hospitals, and the Canadian Cancer Society, among others, to improve cancer care for all Ontarians and help families navigate the cancer care system.

Our investment in Ontario hospitals will help to reduce wait times for biopsies, MRIs, and CT scans. The earlier diagnoses will allow more timely treatment, improving patients' chances of survival and recovery — and avoiding the costs of treating more advanced cancers.

Further, we will reduce regional disparities in access to cancer treatment. No matter where they live, every cancer patient deserves access to the urgent care they need and as close to home as possible. We will increase access to supports for patients and their families, including psychosocial support, symptom-management support, and education about take-home cancer drugs. We will also address the worrisome lack of oversight and patient protection when it comes to cancer drug therapy at private clinics. Additionally, we will develop a provincial strategy for urgently expanding Ontario's capacity for stem-cell transplants by the third year of our mandate, including streamlining and expediting capital projects.

In addition to our plan to guarantee universal, free access to take-home cancer drugs, Andrea Horwath and the NDP have committed to several other historic investments in health care. While the Liberal government's OHIP+ program has left millions of people without prescription drug coverage, an NDP government will make Ontario the first province with universal pharmacare by 2020 — so every Ontarian can get the medication they need. It will mean lower costs, less worrying, and better health for everyone. Unlike the Liberal government's plan, nobody will be excluded. Pharmacare will begin with universal coverage for approximately 125 essential medicines — chosen through an independent process led by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs. We will work to expand this list as quickly as possible. Our other health care commitments include providing hospital funding that keeps up with inflation and community needs, including \$1.2 billion in immediate investments, and issuing a moratorium on any further layoffs of frontline care workers.

New Democrats are committed to doing everything a government can do to relieve the worry patients and families feel after a cancer diagnosis. We will endeavour to give everyone facing a battle with cancer the best fighting chance by making the treatment their doctor prescribes available, and free, no matter when and where they need it. That's change for the better, and we look forward to getting to work.

Best,

Ontario's New Democrats

Rima Berns-McGown