



## Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador

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Jackie Manthorne, President & CEO  
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Jennie Dale, Co-founder  
Dense Breasts Canada

Dear Jaymee, Jackie and Jennie,

Thank you for writing to ask me to respond to several questions related to cancer care and healthcare in Newfoundland and Labrador. I will answer each of your questions in turn.

### **Question 1: National Pharmacare**

**Canada's universal healthcare system does not include access to prescription medicines. The result is a provincial/territorial patchwork of public and private insurance plans that are costly, ineffective and do not guarantee access to prescribed drugs. The federal government has set up an Advisory Council on the Implementation of Pharmacare to look at how access to prescription drugs can be improved in our healthcare system. Patients throughout Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned that national pharmacare will lead to a list of covered drugs that only meets the lowest common denominator.**

**o If elected, will your government support the implementation of a national pharmacare program that guarantees access to prescription medicines and a plan that goes beyond a formulary that meets the lowest common denominator?**

**o If not, please explain how your party will ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have timely access to prescription drugs.**

Yes.

Newfoundland and Labrador's needs are greater, on a per-capita basis, than those of other provinces because our population is more thinly dispersed and its age profile is older (meaning costlier, from a care perspective) than those of other jurisdictions. We will fight to secure greater funding on a "needs" basis rather than on a "per-capita" basis under the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer. We will press the Government of Canada and other governments to cooperate on national programs – such as Pharmacare – that will reduce health care costs for provinces. We will fight to ensure any such program recognizes the particular needs of our province, with its relatively high proportion of seniors, who generally require more health care and medications. Through the Council of the Federation and First Ministers' Meetings, we will press for other initiatives that would benefit our province and the country, including long-term care and child care strategies, labour market agreements, immigration strategies, innovation and infrastructure strategies, and so forth.

We will adjust the provincial drug coverage program to be in line with established clinical guidelines and standards.

We will educate health care providers and patients about the appropriateness of various tests, procedures and treatments to minimize waste and harm in the health care system. Our efforts will complement the work of Choosing Wisely Newfoundland and Labrador (CWNL), which launched in October 2016. CWNL is coordinated by the Translational and Personalized Medicine Initiative at Memorial University, and works in partnership with all provincial Regional Health Authorities, the Newfoundland Labrador Centre for Health Information, the NL Medical Association and the Patient Advisory Council. CWNL is working to reduce unnecessary testing across the province. We will support the efforts of CWNL to reduce waste and improve our health care system.

We will establish a NL Quality Health Council. When decisions about treatment are made on a foundation of solid evidence, patients benefit and health care funding is used more effectively. This Council will be responsible for interpreting evidence and proposing follow-up actions to ensure the province's health care investment decisions are made in the best interests of patients. The Council will be an independent body that consistently reports on outcomes, similar to the financial Auditor General but focused on clinical outcomes. Patients are better served when we minimize waste and harm in the health care system. Supporting the objectives of the collaborative effort between Quality of Care NL and Choosing Wisely NL, the Council will focus on ensuring the right treatments get to the right patients at the right time.

## **Question 2: Information on Breast Density**

**Over 40% of women over the age of 40 have dense breasts. Having dense breasts can make it more difficult for radiologists viewing mammograms to spot cancer because dense breast tissue shows up as white, which is the same**

**color as a cancerous tumor. Dense breasts often cause breast cancer to go undiagnosed in the early stages, and therefore increases an individual's risk of developing later stage breast cancer.**

**o If elected to government, will you commit to ensuring that women are notified about their breast density as part of their mammogram reports?**

**o If elected to government, will you support a campaign to raise public awareness and improve education on breast density?**

Yes, and yes.

We will maximize the use of e-technology to better integrate and modernize the health care system. We will advance the use of the Electronic Medical Record to improve the flow of information among health care providers. In this regard, we will employ technologies such as eConsult, which improves the management of patient referrals. We will maximize the implementation of electronic tools to remind patients of appointments, thereby reducing the large volume of missed appointments.

We will improve communication among all health care providers so that allied health care providers are efficiently using Electronic Medical Records to track patient care. This will minimize errors and avoid needless duplication.

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 provide patients with better access to their own medical record by working with the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI). This technology will enable patients to access their blood work results, scans, clinical notes, etc.

We will improve preventative medicine efforts through effective marketing that teaches people to adopt healthy lifestyles, engage in physical activity, eat healthier and reduce stress.

We will enable health care providers to spend more time with their patients by providing a more flexible fee structure. Patients benefit when their health care providers can take the time to provide education about healthy lifestyle choices.

### **Question 3: Second Hand Smoking**

**Exposure to second-hand smoke is a great health risk for patients with compromised immune systems and health conditions. According to Health Canada, the chemicals inhaled by a smoker through their cigarette makes up the same chemicals inhaled by those exposed to second-hand smoke. The province's Smoke-Free Environment Act 2005 does not establish perimeter**

**bans around all public buildings to protect residents in multi-unit dwellings by declaring a 100% smoke-free policy in all multi-unit dwellings.**

**o If elected, what steps will your party take to address perimeter bans on second-hand smoke around buildings?**

**o If elected, what steps will your party take to address drifting smoke in multi-unit buildings?**

We will open up a conversation about strengthening the enforcement of smoking prohibitions to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke. Public buy-in is needed to make such policies enforceable. We encourage you to support the conversation by helping to spread the facts about the consequences of exposure to second-hand smoke. These things have been said time and again, but without continual reinforcement, the message loses its urgency for many. This may be particularly true at a time when the country is adjusting to new laws permitting the smoking of marijuana and the growing prevalence of vaping – both of which are essentially smoking behaviours that acclimatize people to the behaviour. Hopefully this will not turn back the clock on gains we have made in smoking reduction.

We will do our part to encourage people not to smoke. We will improve preventative medicine efforts through effective marketing that teaches people to adopt healthy lifestyles, engage in physical activity, eat healthier and reduce stress. We will enable health care providers to spend more time with their patients by providing a more flexible fee structure. Patients benefit when their health care providers can take the time to provide education about healthy lifestyle choices.

We will appoint a Chief Wellness Officer for Newfoundland and Labrador. A Chief Wellness Officer is an official who provides strategic vision, planning and direction to the development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to improve health and well-being outcomes for people; regularly monitors and reports outcomes; raises awareness and provides education; creates a culture of wellness; and so forth. This official will find ways to make Newfoundlanders and Labradorians healthier so they are more resilient and need less care from the health system in the long run. This work will improve people's lives while reducing costs.

We will implement basic first aid training, including instruction in the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), for every high school student. These courses have been shown to save lives. We believe such a program will have the added benefit of making young people aware of the importance of good health and the fragility of life.

We are also supporting the implementation of the recommendations of the Collins Task Force on improving educational outcomes, some of which regard wellness. We believe such initiatives – if done well – can motivate more young people to avoid harmful behaviour.

I encourage you to read our other policies on healthcare and other matters in our Blue Book - <https://crosbie2019.ca/blue-book/>

Sincerely,

*Ches Crosbie*

Ches Crosbie  
Leader of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador