

April 19, 2018

Dear President Timmings and Dr. Grinspun:

Thank you for your letter regarding RNAO's vision for improving the health of all in Ontario. Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats truly appreciate our strong relationship with RNAO. And we look forward to continuing our work together to deliver better health care, and make Ontario a better place to work and a more affordable place to live.

For too long, people across Ontario have been told to settle for less than what we know is possible in this great province. We've seen Premiers who have cut corporate income taxes and cut the public services that people count on. We've seen Premiers who have chosen to sell-off our public assets, like Hydro One, and leave families and seniors without the supports that they need. And we've seen Premiers who continually ask our incredibly dedicated Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and health care professionals to do more – with less.

But this time, in this election, we don't have to settle again.

It's time for change. And Ontario needs change for the better.

We need better health care for all Ontarians, better support for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, better funding and staffing in long-term care, better access to home and community care, and the new public services that Ontarians need, including universal Pharmacare and Dental Care for Everyone.

To get good things done, we also need to ask the most profitable corporations and the wealthiest people to pay their fair share.

This is the bold and progressive change that Ontario needs. And only Ontario's New Democrats will get it done.

Andrea Horwath is running to be the next Premier and to deliver change for the better. We look forward to working with RNAO to deliver better health care and to build a healthier future for all.

We are pleased to provide you and your members with responses to your questionnaire. Please see the enclosed attachment.

On behalf of Ontario's New Democrats, please accept our thanks and appreciation for your strong, consistent, and evidence-based advocacy for your members – and for healthy public policies for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,

Ontario's New Democrats

Improving access to nursing care

1. Do you support changes in provincial policy that would enable nurse practitioners (NP) to work to their full scope of practice and be appropriately compensated, thereby increasing access to health care in Ontario?

Ontario's New Democrats have a strong record of working with Nurse Practitioners to enable NPs to work to their full scope of practice and be appropriately compensated. We know that, when Nurse Practitioners and Registered Nurses are able to work to their full scope of practice, patients benefit. And New Democrats believe that what's right for people needs to be at the heart of every decision that government makes.

Our *Change for the Better* platform also includes additional steps to improve access to health care. We will end hallway medicine in our overcrowded hospitals by restoring hospital funding that keeps pace with inflation, population growth, aging, and the unique needs of our communities, including rural and remote communities. We will also fund 2,000 new hospital beds, and work with RNAO and our health sector partners to conduct a comprehensive review of staffing needs and a comprehensive capacity plan.

We will also make an historic investment in community-governed and non-profit care. Ontario's Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres, Francophone Centres de santé communautaire, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics and Community Family Health Teams do incredibly important work – and we will build on that work. We will invest in new community-governed non-profit health centres (as well as new satellite locations for existing centres) in the 35 regions that need them but don't have one. This includes fast-growing, underserved GTA communities like Mississauga, Brampton, York Region and Scarborough. Those centres will all open by 2025, with a capital investment of \$42 million per year starting in 2020.

2. Will you support improving patient health outcomes and safety by mandating that:

- **Any new nursing hires in tertiary, quaternary, and cancer care hospitals be RNs**
- **All first home care assessments be conducted by an RN**

It is unacceptable that Ontario has the lowest RN-to-population ratio in the entire country. New Democrats are committed to undertaking a comprehensive, evidence-based review of human resources needs across Ontario's health care system. In doing that important work, we will work with RNAO and our health sector partners to determine the appropriate staffing levels that are needed to provide excellent care to every patient.

We will also work to make home care in Ontario the best in the entire country. For more than three-quarters of a million Ontarians, home care makes a world of difference. It's what lets them live at home, in their own community, with dignity and comfort. But in Ontario today, home care is in bad shape. An estimated 4,500 Ontarians are stuck on wait lists for personal support services.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will immediately increase home care funding by \$300 million. This investment will allow us to eliminate wait lists for personal support services, and increase service hours so that health care providers have more time to spend with each person who needs care. We will remove arbitrary caps on care imposed by the Conservatives and left in place by the Liberals. We will offer more respite care for exhausted family caregivers. We will provide more stable employment for home care professionals, and we will ensure consistent, reliable care throughout Ontario.

3. Will you support increasing access to health services by implementing independent RN prescribing and allowing RNs to continue to initiate the controlled act of psychotherapy?

New Democrats strongly support increased access to health services for all Ontarians. We will work with RNAO to move forward on implementing independent RN prescribing, and allowing RNs to continue to initiate the controlled act of psychotherapy. In every decision we make, an NDP government will work with health care professionals to make evidence-based decisions that support increased access to care for all Ontarians.

4. Will you commit to supporting minimum staffing levels in LTC homes so that residents can live safely and with dignity?

Yes. After two decades of inaction by Liberal and Conservative Premiers, it's time to change seniors care for the better. Ontario's seniors deserve care that treats them with respect and dignity – and they deserve a government that will ensure they get it.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will restore a legislated minimum standard of care for every long-term care resident in Ontario, and fund long-term care homes so they can meet it. The standard will require every long-term care home to give each resident a minimum of four hours of hands-on care every day on average.

We will also do more to fix seniors care. Within our first 100 days in government, we will expand the mandate of the public inquiry into long-term care to find and fix the specific problems that have been stripping seniors of their dignity. We'll hear directly from families about their experiences, and address solutions around the safety of residents and staff; the quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and practices; regulation, enforcement, and inspections; capacity, availability, and accessibility in every region; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; and government action – and inaction – on past recommendations to improve long-term care.

We will build and fund 15,000 more long-term care beds over the next five years – rising to 40,000 new beds by 2028. Our investment will focus on expanding the not-for-profit and municipal sector, where funding goes to patient care instead of profit. This will include investment in culturally-appropriate care: offering seniors greater access to care in their primary language, eating food they are familiar with, and engaging in activities they know and love.

And we will update Ontario's Long-Term Care *Residents' Bill of Rights* to include the right of spouses not to be separated against their will. Couples who have spent their entire lives together should never be separated by a system that doesn't work for them.

Improving Ontario's health system

5. Do you support a health system that is anchored in primary care, and do you agree that the 4,000 RN care coordinators currently in the LHINs must be located in primary care settings?

Ontario's New Democrats strongly support better access to primary care – and we are driven to make Ontario's home care the best in Canada. We will work with you to improve patient outcomes by

eliminating wait lists for home care, guaranteeing access to the services that people need, and supporting every health care professional in home care to help them provide excellent care every day.

We will make an historic investment in community-governed and non-profit care. Ontario's Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres, Francophone Centres de santé communautaire, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics and Community Family Health Teams do incredibly important work – and we will build on that work. We will invest in new community-governed non-profit health centres (as well as new satellite locations for existing centres) in the 35 regions that need them but don't have one. This includes fast-growing, underserved GTA communities like Mississauga, Brampton, York Region and Scarborough. Those centres will all open by 2025, with a capital investment of \$42 million per year starting in 2020.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will also increase home care funding by \$300 million. This investment will allow us to eliminate wait lists for personal support services, and increase service hours so that health care providers have more time to spend with each person who needs care. We will remove arbitrary caps on care imposed by the Conservatives and left in place by the Liberals. We will offer more respite care for exhausted family caregivers. We will provide more stable employment for home care professionals, and we will ensure consistent, reliable care throughout Ontario.

6. RNAO supports a provincial pharmacare program covering all medically necessary drugs without means testing, user fees or co-payments for Ontarians of all ages. Do you agree with RNAO?

Yes! Andrea Horwath will create the first universal Pharmacare program in Ontario. Our Pharmacare for Everyone plan will mean lower cost, less worry, and better health for millions of Ontarians who do not have drug coverage today.

With the NDP's Pharmacare plan, all Ontarians will have access to prescription medications for the very first time, including the over 2.2 million Ontarians who have no drug coverage today. Universal Pharmacare will begin with universal coverage for essential medicines, as recommended by the World Health Organization. This evidence-based program will be implemented by 2020 and will realize significant savings for uninsured families, as well as businesses and private payers that pay for employee drug benefits. No one will lose any coverage they enjoy today – and no Ontarian will pay any deductible or premium as part of our Pharmacare plan. We will allocate an annual budget of \$475 million in the first year – and we will invest savings in expanding the list of essential medicines to reach comprehensive coverage.

Just as Tommy Douglas started Medicare in Saskatchewan with hospital insurance and it expanded to include all Canadians, Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats will build universal Pharmacare for everyone in Ontario – and work to expand it to achieve the universal and comprehensive national Pharmacare that all Canadians need.

You can find out more about Andrea's plan at: <https://www.ontariondp.ca/pharmacareforeveryone>

7. In Ontario, about 2.3 million people cannot afford to visit a dental professional. Will you join RNAO and the Ontario Oral Health Alliance in asking the province to invest \$10 million as a first step, to provide oral health care to adults and seniors living with low income across the province?

Andrea Horwath is the only leader with a bold and innovative plan to deliver Dental Care for Everyone. With an historic investment of over \$1.2 billion in the first year of implementation, Ontario's New Democrats will ensure that every Ontarian can get the dental care they need – either through a workplace plan, or with their health card.

Today, one in three working people don't have a workplace benefits plan. Too many people go without basic dental care because they can't afford to see a dentist. And every three minutes, someone visits an Ontario doctor's office or emergency room to get emergency care for a dental problem.

It doesn't have to be this way. Nobody should have to live in pain, or suffer permanent damage because they couldn't afford dental care. And nobody should have to rack up credit card bills just to get essential care for themselves or their kids.

That's why Andrea Horwath is committed to dental care for everyone — delivering lower costs, less worry and better health for Ontarians. With our plan, every worker will have workplace benefits for themselves and their family. That includes people in part-time or casual jobs. And it includes independent workers, like people on contract or freelance, who need an innovative new model for health benefits that works in the changing economy — a model where health benefits follow the person, not the job.

We will require every employer to provide dental benefits to workers and their families that meet a minimum standard of coverage. And employers who aren't currently offering benefits that meet the standard will have two options: find a workplace benefits plan that does, or sign up for Ontario Benefits.

Ontario Benefits will be an innovative, publicly-administered workplace benefits plan, that provides an affordable way for employers to meet the minimum standard of health benefits, starting with dental coverage. The NDP's vision is to grow Ontario Benefits over time to ensure workers receive additional workplace benefits like vision care and registered therapies. Our first year investment in Ontario Benefits is \$575 million.

New Democrats also believe that dental care must be accessible for everyone outside the workforce — including seniors who don't have retiree benefits, and every family living on social assistance. That's why Andrea Horwath and the NDP will extend public dental coverage to every senior without retiree benefits, and to every person on social assistance, ensuring that over 2 million more Ontarians are eligible for public dental coverage. Ontario Public Dental will ensure that seniors and people on social assistance also have access to the minimum standards of dental care, which will provide a level of coverage comparable to existing public dental programs. Our first-year investment in Ontario Public Dental is \$670 million and will grow to meet demand and increase sustainability.

We will also work with dental professionals and health agencies to ensure people can get publicly-funded dental coverage in the setting of their choice, whether it's in a private dental clinic or in Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres, or public health units. That's why we will expand public dental services at those locations with capital investments of at least \$25 million to build 70 new dental suites and operate seven mobile dental buses, especially in rural, remote and Northern communities.

It's an historic investment — and combined with Ontario Benefits, it will mean every Ontario resident has a dental care plan, and access to excellent oral health care when they need it.

Drug and dental coverage for everyone is the change for the better that Ontario needs. You can find out more about Andrea's plan at: <https://www.ontariondp.ca/druganddental>

8. Do you support RNAO's call to transform funding models in long-term care (LTC) homes so that funding is not cut when homes deliver better outcomes?

New Democrats strongly support increased funding for long-term care to meet the needs of Ontario's seniors. We will work with RNAO to address your concerns about the current funding models. And we will take additional steps to fix seniors care – and deliver the comfort, safety, and dignity that every senior deserves.

Andrea Horwath will restore a legislated minimum standard of care for every long-term care resident in Ontario, and fund long-term care homes so they can meet it. The standard will require every long-term care home to give each resident a minimum of four hours of hands-on care every day on average.

Within our first 100 days in government, we will expand the mandate of the public inquiry into long-term care to find and fix the specific problems that have been stripping seniors of their dignity. We'll hear directly from families about their experiences, and address solutions around the safety of residents and staff; the quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and practices; regulation, enforcement, and inspections; capacity, availability, and accessibility in every region; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; and government action – and inaction – on past recommendations to improve long-term care.

We will build and fund 15,000 more long-term care beds over the next five years – rising to 40,000 new beds by 2028. Our investment will focus on expanding the not-for-profit and municipal sector, where funding goes to patient care instead of profit. This will include investment in culturally-appropriate care: offering seniors greater access to care in their primary language, eating food they are familiar with, and engaging in activities they know and love.

And we will update Ontario's Long-Term Care *Residents' Bill of Rights* to include the right of spouses not to be separated against their will. Couples who have spent their entire lives together should never be separated by a system that doesn't work for them.

9. Do you agree that Ontarians should have ownership and control of their own personal health records and that this information should be electronic and portable between health-care settings?

Yes. Personal health information must always be protected with the highest level of security. New Democrats are also committed to working with the health care sector and our health care partners to ensure that personal health records improve the care and treatment available to Ontarians.

10. Do you support government working in partnership with Indigenous nations to address urgent health needs identified by them, such as the ongoing crisis of children and youth suicide?

Yes. It's outrageous that in 2018, First Nations and Indigenous people do not have access to the same level of health services as non-Indigenous Ontarians. Many First Nations communities struggle to ensure that people have access to even basic health care. And successive governments have failed to change the situation.

The roots of this crisis lie in the history of colonization, and in ongoing systemic racism and discrimination to this day. Far too many First Nations and Indigenous people have been told to settle for unacceptable access to health care, not to mention a lack of safe drinking water in roughly 90 communities, and unlivable housing conditions. The result: Elders unable to get the care they need; families waiting weeks just to see a nurse; people waiting to be flown off-reserve for vital care; mothers and fathers losing children to the youth suicide crisis; and perpetual boil-water advisories.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP are committed to providing better health-care services in partnership with First Nations in every community. We will listen to First Nations leaders who are already leading the transformation of First Nations health care, and do all we can to support their work.

We will double Ontario's investment in the First Nations Health Action Plan, providing at least \$209 million per year, starting in 2019. We will, in partnership with the communities involved, invest the capital needed to ensure communities have sustainable access to clean water. We will listen to First Nations about which investments will do the most good in their communities.

We anticipate that our doubled investment will support:

- Health-care programs designed and implemented by First Nations
- More physician days, allowing communities to have access to a doctor for more than just a few days every month
- Measures to address the challenge of recruiting and keeping nurses and health care professionals, especially in northern and remote communities
- Expanded primary care teams that include traditional healing approaches
- Expanded youth programs, crisis support, trauma response teams, and suicide-prevention training
- Improved diabetes prevention and management
- More home and community-care services and telemedicine options
- Support for midwifery care and maternal health

We won't allow jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial governments to stand in the way of action, and keep people from the care they need. Instead of arguing with the federal government first and acting later, we will act first — in full partnership with First Nations — and argue with the federal government later.

For example, in a significant change from current practice, we will support health-care infrastructure investment in First Nations communities. We won't let inadequate federal investment in First Nations health-care infrastructure stand in the way of attracting and retaining health care workers — and in the way of providing the excellent health care services that everyone in Ontario deserves.

Improving our living standards

11. Do you support increasing investment to prevent and address the crisis of homelessness:

- **Invest one per cent of Ontario's budget (\$1.5 billion) to build new affordable, accessible housing and fix existing units in need of repair**
- **Create 30,000 supportive housing units for people with mental health and addiction challenges over 10 years**
- **Work with other levels of government to address homelessness and ensure adequate shelter space**

Yes, New Democrats support increased investment to prevent and address the growing crisis of homelessness in Ontario. We owe it to each other and to ourselves to end poverty, especially child poverty. And we want a province where every Ontarian can live with dignity and optimism.

Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats will invest \$2 billion in affordable housing. We will build new affordable homes — 65,000 of them over the next decade. We will sign on to the federal National Housing Strategy, which will fund the construction of about 20,000 units, including non-profit and co-op housing. Our 10-year capital plan will make additional investments to build the remaining 45,000 units. We will also overhaul the government's inclusionary zoning regulations, so they actually accomplish what they set out to do: require a certain number of affordable homes in new housing developments. That will include increasing the percentage of affordable homes required and bringing rental properties under the regulations.

Andrea Horwath has also committed to funding the province's one-third share of the cost of repairing social housing across Ontario. We will maintain rent-geared-to-income and rent supplements. And we will work with municipal governments to address homelessness and ensure that our communities have the emergency shelter spaces they need.

In addition to our affordable housing commitments, we will invest over \$1.4 billion to build and staff 30,000 new supportive housing units. Today, there's a critical shortage of the supportive housing that lets people dealing with mental health challenges live independently while getting the supports they need. We will invest in 30,000 new supportive housing units over the next 10 years, building at least 3,000 every year — the number recommended by the Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council — and funding ongoing rent supplements and support staff costs. We will invest \$228 million per year in capital funding, plus operational funding that increases by \$50 million per year.

Beyond housing, we will take significant steps to tackle poverty. We endorse the provincial Income Security Roadmap for Change report and its findings. And we will work to achieve the objectives laid out in the Roadmap. Today, the rules governing social assistance are complicated and often punitive. We believe that the focus of the social assistance system should be helping people overcome barriers, get out of poverty and participate in society. Social assistance should be based on trust, working together, and solving problems.

According to the recommendation made in the Roadmap, we will begin by establishing a new, flat rate structure that is simple and fair. Based on the advice of the working group, people receiving Ontario Works will receive increases of 10%, 7% and 5%, while people receiving support from the Ontario Disability Support Program will see annual increases of 5%. Future increases will be based on income adequacy, and set by an independent panel. We will also continue Ontario's Basic Income pilot and evaluate its outcomes. And we endorse the call to develop a minimum income standard over the next decade that will lift people out of poverty.

12. Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour on January 1, 2019?

Yes! Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats have worked shoulder-to-shoulder with workers and advocates to call for a \$15 minimum wage. And we will deliver on our commitment.

We will increase the minimum wage to \$15 for everyone, then index it to inflation so it keeps its buying power. And, unlike the Wynne Liberals, we will ensure that the \$15 minimum wage applies to all

workers, without exception. All workers are entitled to earn no less than the minimum wage, and we will make sure that bar and restaurant staff, students, and young people aren't left out.

We will also take additional steps to support good jobs. Our plan for Ontario Benefits means that all workers – from full-time employees to freelancers – will have a workplace health benefits plan, starting with dental coverage for themselves and their family, and growing over time to include vision coverage and more.

We will require employers to provide at least three weeks paid vacation to every full-time employee, up from the current two weeks. We will make it easier for workers to join a union with card-check certification and first-contract arbitration. And we will create 27,000 new student jobs so that young people can get the real-life work experience in their post-secondary education, including paid co-op and internship opportunities that allow students to graduate with real-world experience.

Improving our environment

13. Will you push for a provincial carbon pricing system that is sufficient for the province to reach its greenhouse gas emission targets, while protecting vulnerable populations?

Yes. The NDP has long been a strong voice for both environmental sustainability and fairness. And we believe that the transition to a green, low-carbon economy must be a fair one, so we don't leave communities behind, and so all of us can realize the benefits.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP believe polluters should pay for the emissions they release, and we will continue with pricing carbon through a fair, effective and transparent cap-and-trade market. At least 25% of the revenues from cap-and-trade will support communities and individuals who today are carrying more than their fair share of the burden — such as northern, rural, and low-income Ontarians — and assist trade-exposed industries.

We will set clear greenhouse gas reduction targets that we can and will meet. And we will dedicate \$50 million in cap-and-trade revenues to seed the creation of a new no-interest/on-bill home-efficiency retrofit program, allowing residents to install energy conserving technologies and improve the energy efficiency of their home. We will target the program to communities and individuals facing the greatest financial barriers to lowering their energy use. And we will work to ensure all municipalities have active transportation plans — strategies for promoting walking, cycling, and other human propelled transportation, by 2021.

We will also set achievable but aggressive targets to reduce air and water pollution across the province. We will move ahead with studies of air pollution and its effects in Sarnia and Hamilton, and in other communities as needed.

We will update the Environmental Bill of Rights for the first time since the NDP introduced it more than two decades ago, to restore accountability, transparency, and public participation whenever the environment is affected.

And we will clean up the mercury in the English–Wabigoon River system, so people in Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations, who have waited far too long for action, can finally once again drink the water and eat the fish their communities have relied on for generations. And we will fund a dedicated mercury treatment centre so they can get the care they need after decades of mercury

poisoning. We will maintain the commitment to index the Mercury Disability Fund, and commit an additional \$12 million to make retroactive payments to people suffering because of the provincial government's inaction.

Improving our fiscal capacity

14. Ontario is not adequately investing in infrastructure and services. To restore these investments while balancing the provincial budget, RNAO advocates for expanding government revenue through a combination of fairer taxes and other revenue sources, such as making polluters pay. Do you agree with RNAO?

Yes. We will ensure the wealthiest people and most profitable businesses pay their fair share for the services that make their success possible. Ontario's businesses benefit significantly from Ontario's highly educated workforce, modern infrastructure and health care system. And they'll benefit even more from the investments we're making. So it's only fair to ask them to pay their share.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will roll back Liberal and Conservative corporate-income-tax giveaways, returning the tax rate on corporate profits to 13%, up from 11.5% today.

We will close a loophole that's allowing big corporations to qualify for a small business exemption. There are a number of small business exemptions in the Employer Health Tax that are being used by larger businesses. It's time to close that loophole.

We will also ask the wealthiest among us to pay their fair share by raising income tax on amounts earned over \$220,000 by one percentage point, and on earnings over \$300,000 by two percentage points.

We will add a surcharge for luxury vehicles that cost more than \$90,000, asking those who can afford to spend that money on a car to pay a bit more.

We also recognize that housing speculation and flipping are driving up housing prices. So we will implement a new speculation tax that will not be limited to foreign buyers and will apply annually. It will be targeted toward foreign and domestic speculators who do not pay tax in Ontario. We believe that houses should be homes for people, not for speculating.