

Questions for 2007 Provincial Election Candidates

Social Determinants of Health

1) Out of deep concern for the more than 1.7 million Ontarians living in poverty, many voters, including nurses, are looking to the next provincial government to implement a comprehensive poverty strategy. What is your party's platform on how to reduce poverty in Ontario? Will your party commit to implementing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy?

What to look for in their response:

- Increase in minimum wage
- Increase in social assistance rates
- Commitment to housing
- Enforcement of labour standards

2) Ontario's social assistance rates are so dangerously low that recipients are at risk for compromised nutrition and poor health as people have to choose between paying the rent and buying food. What will your party do to ensure that our most vulnerable community members can live in health and dignity?

What to look for in their response:

- Commitment to a significant increase in social assistance rates. RNAO is calling for a 35 per cent increase in Ontario Works rates and a 20 per cent increase in Ontario Disability Support Plan rates.
- Improved administration and service delivery of social assistance programs so that clients receive timely, respectful assistance.

Environment

3) Chronic conditions such as asthma, cancer, developmental disabilities, and birth defects have become the primary causes of illness and death in children in industrialized countries, and there is growing expert recognition that chemicals in the environment are partly responsible for these trends. Will your party commit to implementing a comprehensive strategy to reduce environmental, household, and occupational carcinogens?

What to look for in their response:

- Legislation that will reduce commercial use and generation of toxic substances
- Publicly accessible data base of toxic releases
- Labelling of products containing carcinogens, mutagens, and reproductive toxins

4) The public has grown increasingly aware and concerned about the effects of chemical pesticides on health, and seventy-one per cent of Ontarians support a province-wide ban on most lawn and garden pesticides. There are many epidemiological and laboratory studies linking a range of health problems to pesticide exposure. What steps will your party take to protect Ontarians from the effects of non-essential pesticide use?

What to look for in their response:

- Commitment to enacting legislation that will ban non-essential use of pesticides in Ontario.

Medicare

5) There is overwhelming evidence that Canada's universal, single-payer financing of not-for-profit delivery of health care services provides better health outcomes at less cost than the American market model of health care. Will your party commit to enforcing the *Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act* to prevent for-profit clinics from delivering medically necessary health-care services in Ontario?

What to look for in their response:

- Firm commitment to enforcing the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act
- Incorporation of not-for-profit delivery as a governing principle of any new health-care legislation.

6) Research into public private partnerships (P3s) or alternative financing and procurement (AFP) projects show that they are more costly, the quality of services is reported to be poor, and there are serious concerns about transparency and public accountability. Will your party support an immediate and indefinite moratorium on P3 hospitals in Ontario?

What to look for in their response:

- Commitment to stopping P3 construction of hospitals
- Ensuring that nursing and other services are excluded from existing contracts

Nursing Workforce

7) Ontario's RN workforce is aging and in 2006 the average age of RNs was 45.6 years. At the same time, 23 per cent of Ontario's nurses are over the age of 55 and could retire. Given the serious implications of these realities on the provision of care for Ontarians, how does your party plan to:

- a. Recruit and retain more nurses?

What to look for in their response:

- Increase nursing enrolments

- Continue the new graduate initiative
- Increase the RN workforce by 9,000 FTEs by 2010
- 70 per cent full-time employment for all RNs
- Support expanded roles for RNs including nurse endoscopist, nurse first assist, etc
- Enhance roles and utilization of NPs

b. Keep our senior experienced nurses in the workforce?

What to look for in their response:

- 80/20 program for RNs 55 years and older

9) Presently there is a wide disparity in income across sectors, with nurses working in the hospital sector receiving significantly higher incomes than those working in the community or long-term care sectors. Given the importance of recruitment and retention of nurses in all sectors, what is your party's position on wage parity for nurses across health-care sectors?

What to look for in their response:

- Targeted, conditional funding to equalize remuneration and working conditions for RNs working in acute care, primary care/family practice, home care, and long-term care sectors.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

10) Many Ontarians face continued difficulties in accessing primary health care. Registered nurses, working collaboratively with other health-care providers, are well suited to provide a point of entry to health promotion and disease prevention as well as curative, rehabilitative, and support services. What is your party's position on funding nurse-led primary health care and chronic disease management clinics?

What to look for in their response:

- Firm commitment to the number of nurse-led clinics and a timeline