

## RNAO Questionnaire – Liberal Response

### 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 Liberals know the value of nurse practitioners in our health system. That's why we created nurse-practitioner led clinics and we will continue to support nurse practitioners and the critical role they play in our health system.

Over the course of this mandate Ontario Liberals expanded nurse practitioners' scope of practice to authorize a diagnosis, order and interpret diagnostic tests, and prescribe medication – including controlled drugs – and other treatment. Nurses and nurse practitioners also have full access to prescribing CT, Ultrasound and X-ray to patients.

The work Nurse Practitioners contribute to Ontario's health system is critical. That is why Ontario Liberals committed to investing approximately \$330 million over three years to support the recruitment and retention of nurse practitioners in primary care teams across the province. This investment will increase the compensation of nurse practitioners in primary care settings to ensure they are more fairly compensated.

As we continue to transform our health system towards one that puts patients first and helps more people access better care faster that is closer to home we will work with system partners to ensure we have innovative funding mechanisms to ensure providers are being compensated for their work fairly.

One example of this will be working with the profession to ensure nurse practitioners are fairly compensated for medical aid in dying.

**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

Since our government took office, more than 30,000 nurses have begun work in Ontario. In 2017, the number of nurses employed in Ontario increased for the thirteenth consecutive year. There are more than 1,200 nurses employed in Ontario compared to last year. From 2011 to 2015, most net-new nursing positions in the hospital sector were filled by RNs. (4,248 of 7,625 hospital positions).

In the 2018 Budget, Ontario Liberals boosted hospital funding by \$822 million, this year to help ensure Ontario's nurses have the resources they need to improve access to care and better serve patients across the province. The Liberals also committed to reaching a provincial average of four hours of care for residents in long-term care homes, beginning with hiring one additional registered nurses for each of the province's 627 long-term care homes.

A re-elected Liberal government would add 3,500 more nurses to Ontario's health care system this year alone, delivering better care for people at home and in the community. 2,500 of these hires would be in hospitals where the hiring of RNs would be prioritized.

Ontario Liberals are committed to continue working with health system partners to ensure the highest quality care is being delivered. To support this work we have committed to a health workforce planning strategy and will ensure that all health care providers have a seat at the table.

To support the growing number of patients requiring home care Ontario will invest an additional \$650 million in home care over the next three years, \$230 million for this year alone.

This will fund an estimated 284,000 more nursing visits – or the equivalent of 146 nursing positions -- and improved working conditions and contract rates for PSWs, registered practical nurses, registered nurses and therapists.

### **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?**

Ontario Liberals expanded the scope of practice to allow registered nurses to independently prescribe drugs in certain circumstances and nurse practitioners to prescribe controlled drugs and substances. The College of Nurses was notified in 2017 to ensure RNs can continue to independently initiate psychotherapy while the controlled act is in force. Registered nurses will play a key role in the delivery and success of our historic mental health investment and plan to ensure every

family has access to the mental health and addiction supports they need, including the expansion of publicly-funded psychotherapy.

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

The needs of long-term care residents are becoming more complex. That is why Ontario Liberals have committed to investing \$300 million over three years in new funding, starting with \$50 million in 2018–19 to hire a registered nurse for every home, and setting a goal of increasing the provincial average to four hours of daily care per resident by 2022. This investment will add 15 million more hours of direct care that will provide residents with more direct, one-on-one patient care, including nursing, personal support and therapeutic care. It will also ensure that every home will have staff with specialized training in behavioural supports and in palliative and end-of-life care.

This investment will provide all residents living in long-term care with additional care starting this year while we continue to build more-long term care capacity across the province.

**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 Liberals have been working with the RNAO and health system partners to embed care coordinators in primary care settings.

A re-elected Ontario Liberal party looks forward to continuing this work.

**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?**

Universal access to health care and a commitment to health equity are fundamental values underpinning our health care system. Ontario Liberals believe in a universal publicly-funded health care system. Its preservation is essential for the health of Ontarians now and in the future. That is why Ontario Liberals made the biggest expansion to medicare in a generation with the creation of OHIP+ -- free prescription drugs for all 4400 prescription drugs on the Ontario Drug Formulary completely free for all children and youth under 25.



Ontario Liberals are continuing to lead the way in national pharmacare by expanding OHIP+ to seniors over 65. This next expansion eliminates the co-pay and deductible for all seniors making prescription drugs completely free, saving seniors an average of \$240 a year.

Similar to the leadership role the Premier played in enhancing the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Ontario Liberals continue to work collaboratively with its federal, provincial and territorial partners and will advocate for a national pharmacare program to make prescription drugs accessible for all Canadians. No one should ever have to choose to between paying for their prescription or putting food on the table.

Ontario Liberals will continue to fight for historic programs like OHIP + and the services that all Ontarians need and deserve.

**7. In Ontario, about 2.3 million people cannot afford to visit a dental professional. Will you join RAO 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?**

Ontario Liberals created the Healthy Smiles program that gives all low-income children in Ontario access to free oral health care.

We are expanding our commitment to access to oral health for people without workplace benefits by committing \$1 billion over three years – on top of our investments to OHIP+ -- to make oral health care more affordable among whom low income earners are overrepresented. That is why we introduced the Drug and Dental Benefit Program. Ontario Liberals are taking the burden of health care costs away from families. In a historic way at a historic pace.

And that is exactly what we've done with our new dental and drugs program. Families can now benefit from up to \$700 per year for a family of four which could cover dental or prescription drug costs. That could cover 4 exams for a low or middle income family without workplace benefits with enough left over to pay for fillings or additional cleaning if needed. It's going to ensure those children know the value of growing up with good oral health, that years down the road they have the confidence of a good smile.

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This \$700 isn't just a savings for the family, it is an opportunity for those children to have the confidence to grow up with good oral health.

**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?**

We support RNAO's call to ensure all long-term care homes are delivering the best possible care.

That is why Ontario Liberals are adding more nursing support in long-term care to meet the provincial goal of four hours of direct care by 2022. Our first step will be hiring a new RN in every home over the course of the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Going forward we will be adding further nursing, personal support and therapeutic care staff to increase quality of care in LTC homes.

With these investments every home will be able to deliver high quality care with an appropriate level of staff to resident ratio.

Working with system partners we are committed to ensuring that the current system allows homes to deliver the best quality of care.

**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?**

Ontario Liberals know that digital technology can make the health care journey more patient-centred and that digital health care is one of the greatest tools for patient empowerment.

That's why we are investing in digital tools and platforms such as eReferrals, in wait-time and local service data and in online health information.

Almost every Ontarian who receives health care services has a secure digital health record. More than 117,000 healthcare providers across the province can access digital health records, an increase of 28% from the previous year. We continue to improve the connectivity, access and navigation so that all patients can have digital access to their health records across platforms.

We are working to ensure that providers can share digital health records. As part of our investments in home care we will work with providers to ensure that there is improved digital information and communication tools for caregivers and patients.

**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?**

Ontario's First Nations Health Action Plan is increasing equitable access to care and taking steps to give First Nations decision-making power over health care through an investment of nearly \$222 million over three years followed by sustained funding of \$104.5 million annually. The new initiatives created by the Ontario Liberals include:

- Providing funding directly to each of the 133 First Nations communities in Ontario to strengthen access to culturally appropriate home and community care services, including at-home nursing visits, help with bathing and preparing meals, or transportation for people with mobility challenges. Ontario is also expanding access to home and community care services at nearly 60 delivery sites across the province to help Indigenous people living in urban areas connect more easily to the services they need.
- Creating 16 new or expanded Indigenous-governed and community-drive interprofessional primary care teams, including new Aboriginal Health Access Centres, across Ontario, to provide culturally safe primary health care services and programs to over 70,000 Indigenous people, including individuals and families living in remote and fly-in communities. These teams can include traditional healers, nurse practitioners, dietitians and mental health counsellors.
- Training up to 1,000 health care workers living and working in First Nations communities, or for Indigenous health care organizations, who are providing palliative care. This training will help First Nations and urban Indigenous people get the care they need and allow them to stay at home or in the community for as long as possible if that is their wish.

- Funding 34 Indigenous-led mental health and wellness programs across the province that include traditional healing, to provide enhanced, culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous youth, adults, families and communities. These programs include funding over 100 new mental health workers that will serve more than 69 First Nations communities, as well as urban Indigenous communities in cities such as Toronto, Kenora, Thunder Bay, Barrie, Midland, Sudbury, Ottawa and London.
- Funding to establish or expand 10 Indigenous-led Healing and Treatment Centres across Ontario, which will offer over 50 new culturally safe treatment beds for Indigenous people. Available services will include substance use disorder services, holistic mental health counselling and cultural supports.
- Partnering with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and Matawa First Nations Management on a new Remote First Nations Family Medicine Residency Program to recruit and train family doctors to work in remote First Nations communities.

### **Improving our living standards**

**11. Do you support increasing investment to prevent and address the crisis of homelessness: • Invest one per 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**

We are committed to ensuring that the people on Ontario have a safe and affordable place to call home. When families have access to affordable housing, they are given the opportunity to reach their full potential. Unlike the PCs and the NDP, we have a solid track record on housing and will continue to make strategic investments in affordable housing. Under Kathleen Wynne's leadership, the government has increased annual investment in housing to \$1 billion per year.

- We are supporting the creation of over 22,000 affordable rental housing units and more than 335,000 repairs to social and affordable

housing units; and, providing rental and down payment assistance to over 93,000 households in need.

- Our government is investing up to \$200 million in operating funding for housing allowances and support services to assist up to 6,000 families and individuals over the next three years. We are also supporting the construction of up to 1,500 new supportive housing units over the long-term.
- Our Fair Housing Plan is protecting homebuyers and tenants alike, because everyone deserves a suitable home that they can afford. This includes extending rent control to all private units, which protects tenants from unfair and unaffordable rent increases.
- We unlocked the value of provincial lands and expanded funding for affordable housing, ensuring the affordability of tens-of-thousands of existing and future homes.
- Through the Development Charge Rebate Programs, we will provide over \$200 million in municipal supports to create market and below-market housing
- The National Housing Strategy will deliver over \$4 Billion dollars to support housing in Ontario, including new construction, a portable housing benefit, and the renewal of tens of thousands of units of social housing.
- We introduced inclusionary zoning, which gives municipalities the power to force affordable housing as part of development projects.

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

As mentioned in Budget 2018, increases to the minimum wage are a step towards ensuring that low-wage workers in precarious jobs are treated more fairly. The introduction of the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017*, is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. It builds on the government's *2017 Budget* commitment to modernize Ontario's employment and labour laws, to help safeguard employees, ensure fairer workplaces and support better jobs.



*The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017:*

- Raised the minimum wage to \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018, ensuring that hundreds of thousands of workers receive a raise, and will raise it to \$15 per hour on January 1, 2019;
- Ensures part-time workers are paid the same hourly wage as full-time workers;
- Introduces paid sick days for every worker;
- Introduces 10 personal emergency leave days for workers, including two paid days;
- Introduces new minimum standards for scheduling, including requiring employees to be paid for three hours of work if their shift is cancelled within 48 hours of its scheduled start time;
- Ensures at least three weeks' vacation after five years with the same employer; and
- Steps up enforcement of employment laws.

**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?**

In 2017, we implemented a “best-in-class” cap and trade carbon pricing system, according to the Environment Commissioner, joining Quebec and California in North America’s largest carbon market as of January 1st. Our plan guarantees reductions every year as the cap on pollution decreases, in line with our legally binding carbon reduction targets of 15% below 1990 levels by 2020, 37% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. We took an extra step by enshrining these important greenhouse gas reduction targets into ground-breaking legislation.

Thus far, our carbon market has raised \$2.4 B in proceeds. By law, every penny of those proceeds must be re-invested into programs, through Ontario’s Climate Change Action Plan, to reduce greenhouse gas pollution. Many initiatives are targeted to help vulnerable populations, including investments in social housing retrofits, energy efficiency programs at GreenON.ca, the Wood Heat Pilot

Program, investing in public transit, fare reductions for GO Transit and 905-commuters, and partnering with Indigenous communities.

**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?**

In 2014, we were elected to build Ontario up. Since then, we have been implementing a plan that is about investing in people, creating jobs and growing the economy. At the same time, we worked toward balancing the budget.

This year we delivered on that promise. We balanced the budget and expect to post a \$600 million surplus for the 2017–2018 year. We did it without cutting services and jobs. We did it by investing in people, creating economic growth and carefully managing spending.

As a result, Ontario’s economy has been growing faster than Canada and is leading the world’s strongest economic powers, including the US and Europe. We created over 800,000 net new jobs since the recession, and our unemployment rate is at a 17-year low.

But while our economy is doing well, not everyone is feeling the benefits of it equally. It’s getting harder and harder for people in our province to get ahead.

That’s why Ontario Liberals have made the deliberate choice to invest in the services and supports families in Ontario need right now. The deliberate choice to invest in mental health care, health care, home care, child care and more. As a result, we have chosen to run a small deficit of less than one per cent of GDP and have charted a responsible path back to balance.

Ontario continues to be the leanest government in Canada; our per-capita program spending the lowest in the country. Our interest-paid-on-debt expense is now eight cents on every dollar of revenue — almost half of what it was in 2000, meaning we’re able to borrow at the lowest rates in 25 years.

And we continue to invest heavily in infrastructure. Over the next 10 years, we are investing more than \$106 billion on new and upgraded transit and transportation infrastructure to drive economic growth and support about 65,000 jobs, on average, each year. We will continue to build Ontario up.