

## **Bold New Steps For The Next Generation Of Healthcare**

The vision of many Ontarians is to have a province where people have access to quality and affordable healthcare services. We need a healthcare plan that promotes the wellbeing of Ontarians and provides adequate support for tackling future needs.

My healthcare plan offers solutions for the future of our province. There are three (3) key areas of focus:

- Ensuring that mental healthcare services are properly funded and accessible.
- Providing adequate funding to healthcare services to address issues affecting, e.g., people in Northern and rural communities and those needing long-term care
- Modernizing our system and providing support for caregivers and homecare.

If we want to ensure the health of Ontario, we need to take a bold approach to long-term solutions. My plan can achieve this, here's how:

### **Bold new steps for the next generation of healthcare**

#### **1. Transformational Change in Mental Healthcare**

Many of us know someone that has been affected by mental health and has possibly been disappointed with the services available to them in Ontario. Evidence shows that this situation is getting worse, especially for our children. The number of children and families waiting for access to mental health services in Ontario is at an all-time high, with wait times for services exceeding two years in some cases. This should not be a reality in a province as prosperous as Ontario.

As leader of the Party, I will make a firm commitment to eliminate, within my first two years in office, the waitlist for mental health services for those under the age of 21. I will work to eliminate the waitlist for those under the age of 25 soon afterwards.

##### **A. Make once-in-a-generation funding increases in mental healthcare**

- It is increasingly evident that mental healthcare funding is not keeping up with demand, with some estimates claiming that real funding for mental health centres has decreased by around 50% over the past 25 years.
- I will order an immediate review into provincial mental healthcare funding and staffing levels which will be used to identify gaps and increase resources. This will ensure that our children, and all Ontarians, have the resources they need when they need them.

##### **B. Expand OHIP coverage for mental health services for those under the age of 30**

- My [K-12 Education plan](#) speaks to my plan to expand OHIP coverage for mental health services for those under the age of 30.

- This expansion of OHIP will contribute to destigmatizing mental health among our youth, reducing barriers to access, and will serve as a first step to full OHIP coverage for mental healthcare services for all Ontarians in the future.

C. Tie funding for youth mental health services to demand

- Currently, funding for a variety of community youth mental health services is based on previous allocations, which has resulted in areas with increased need having longer waitlists.
- I will transform this outdated community funding system into a needs-based model to better address the needs of communities.

D. Provide children and their parents with the help and information they need

- Thousands of children don't know where to immediately turn if they require mental healthcare support, creating unnecessary barriers to access.
- To provide easier access to support networks, I will reintroduce the abandoned plan to have mental healthcare workers in every high school.
- I will also review the prospect of introducing wellness testing in schools. This will provide a holistic view of individual student wellness allowing identifying and supporting young people in need to be achieved sooner.
- In addition, I will mandate all schools to proactively provide information on accessing healthcare, including mental health support, to parents and children.

E. Tracking our progress

- Wait times for accessing mental health services in Ontario falls far behind other measures of care, such as surgery or emergency room wait times. This has resulted in less government accountability.
- I will ensure publicly available performance measures are put in place to track our progress to provincial goals.

## **2. Investing in the broader healthcare system**

A commitment to a well-funded, universal, public healthcare system is one of the hallmarks of Canadian democracy. However, structural issues plague the Ontario healthcare system, and with the Ford Conservatives waging an ideological war against spending, these issues may just get worse.

When Ontarians need help, the provincial healthcare system should be there to support them, which is why I am committed to improving healthcare across our province.

A. Maintain and Increase long-term healthcare funding

- We have heard loud and clear that more investments are needed for Ontario's health system. This is why, under my leadership, per-person healthcare funding

- will never decrease. Healthcare funding will also be long-term, stable, and predictable.
- Every day, roughly 3,000 beds in Ontario (approximately 16% of the total available) are filled by patients not requiring urgent care, but for whom there are no beds in the overloaded rehab or long-term care systems where they would otherwise belong. Immediate and urgent solutions are required that involve communities and building more capacity in long-term care.
  - I will establish a secretariat within the Ministry of Health to support health services for people in Northern and rural communities, including primary care, specialists, access to acute and emergency care as well as use of technology and innovation.
  - In addition, we will examine the impact of making small investments in preventative care and the resulting savings for the province e.g. \$150M towards diabetes care could result in \$20B in savings over time.
- B. Increase efforts to tackle the opioid epidemic
- The opioid epidemic has already taken the lives of too many Ontarians, the provincial government needs to do whatever it can to end this scourge in local communities.
  - I will work with our federal, municipal, and law enforcement partners to identify what is required to tackle the opioid epidemic and allocate the necessary resources as quickly as possible. Information from other jurisdictions that have been successful in this area will be sought and shared.
- C. Eliminating parking fees at hospitals
- Families shouldn't have to pay to visit their loved ones in hospitals. I will remove parking fees from hospitals during my first term in office.
  - To reduce the parking demand that may ensue as a result of eliminating fees, I will explore unique and bold ideas to allow families to visit their loved ones in hospitals. This could include entering into agreements with ride-sharing companies to provide rides to and from hospitals, free of charge.
- D. Reverse Public Health cuts to municipalities
- The Ford government's callous cuts to municipal public health services at a time when they are needed most was short-sighted and harmful.
  - I will reverse all cuts to municipal public health and other municipal health services
- E. Increase the resources of the Patient Ombudsman
- Ontarians deserve the peace of mind of knowing that they have someone to turn to when the healthcare system does not perform appropriately.
  - I will increase the resources of Ontario's Patient Ombudsman and study the expansion of the Ombudsman's mandate.

F. Improve the patient experience by identifying frontline gaps

- Ontarians visiting hospitals or clinics know that there is room for improvements to our frontline system. Common complaints range from a lack of communication from staff to simply a lack of places to sit down.
- I will create a team of experts who will be tasked with improving the frontline experience of our healthcare system by reallocating existing resources or by making small targeted investments.
- A culture of continuous improvement in the health system will also be developed with reviews, consultation, shared learning and taking action on meaningful policies.

### 3. Preparing for the future of healthcare

As our population ages and technology progresses, the nature of healthcare will not remain stagnant and we must be prepared for this. This is most evident when addressing the needs of our seniors and in adapting to progress in digital healthcare.

As leader, I will not stand by idly and allow changes in healthcare to go unaddressed. Instead, I will make changes immediately to prepare for the future.

A. Improving assistance for caregiving

- Caregiving is becoming an increasingly important aspect of Ontario's healthcare system. As Ontario's senior population increases, we must ensure caregivers and the families that rely on them have the support they need.
- I will commit to expanding and improving existing financial assistance for caregiving so that support is better aligned with costs.

B. Investing in our Infrastructure to Keep Ontario Moving

- One of the largest worries for patients across Ontario is the lack of publicly funded homecare services available to them.
- As part of the broader increases in healthcare spending, I will increase funding to publicly available homecare services, beginning in the areas that need it most.
- I will invest in recruitment, training, wage improvements and working conditions of personal support workers and nurse practitioners.

C. Harmonize Provincial Business Property Taxes

- Ontario is home to some of the most innovative companies in the world and opportunities exist to improve the healthcare system, save taxpayer dollars, and increase healthcare equity by using new and innovative technologies developed right here in our great province.
- I will ensure that the provincial government is focused on putting newer technology in place that makes access to care more seamless, equitable, and less costly. The goal will be to improve patient care, increase the accuracy of diagnosis, hospital throughput, and safety in prescription drugs.