



## **Arthritis Consumer Experts**

### **Political Party Policy Survey - Green Party Response**

- 1. The time to address models of care in arthritis is now after years of being at the back of the line of health care planning and delivery in New Brunswick. A major barrier is access to care, including the wait times for people with inflammatory arthritis for a first rheumatologist visit. There is a pressing need to explore, invest in, and innovate different care models that allow people with arthritis to receive timely access to suitable care and support for managing their disease.**

**What will your government do to provide high quality, accessible, evidence-based models of care, such as team-based care, for New Brunswick residents living with arthritis?**

The Green Party recognizes the urgent need to improve care models for residents living with arthritis in New Brunswick. To provide high-quality, accessible, and evidence-based care, a Green government will invest in team-based care models that integrate rheumatologists, nurses, physiotherapists, and other healthcare professionals to ensure comprehensive management of arthritis. We will prioritize reducing wait times for initial rheumatologist visits by increasing the number of specialists and implementing telehealth options for remote consultations.

- 2. Indigenous Peoples in Canada have some of the highest rates of serious or life- threatening arthritis in the world and are at greater risk for becoming disabled by arthritis. Significant gaps in Indigenous arthritis care currently exist in New Brunswick. Care models, such as having an Indigenous community-based patient care facilitator, that address health care in a culturally relevant manner and the many barriers to care have been proven to resolve care gaps more effectively and optimize health outcomes of Indigenous Peoples with arthritis and comorbidities.**

**Will your government introduce culturally appropriate, patient-centered policies to help Indigenous Peoples navigate the healthcare system and receive coordinated care within their community to manage their arthritis?**

The Green Party is committed to addressing the significant gaps in arthritis care for Indigenous Peoples in New Brunswick. To optimize health outcomes, we will introduce culturally appropriate, patient-centered policies that empower Indigenous communities in navigating the healthcare system. This includes establishing Indigenous community-based patient care facilitators who can provide guidance and support tailored to the unique needs and cultural contexts of Indigenous Peoples. We will also prioritize the training of healthcare professionals in cultural competence to ensure respectful and effective care.

3. **The next New Brunswick government must take steps to ensure the sustainability of prescription drug plans and the continued affordability of prescription medicines for New Brunswick patients. The Health Ministry stated at the launch of the New Brunswick Biosimilars Initiative that it expected to save over \$10 million once it was fully implemented, thanks to people transitioning from originator biologics to their cost- effective biosimilars, which are highly similar versions of high-cost biologic drugs used to treat chronic diseases, such as inflammatory arthritis.**

**Will your government commit to reinvesting biosimilars savings to increase accessibility to new medicines and expand coverage for existing medicines for people living with inflammatory arthritis?**

We recognize the potential savings from the New Brunswick Biosimilars Initiative and will commit to reinvesting those savings to increase accessibility to new medicines and expand coverage for existing medications for people living with inflammatory arthritis.

4. **Some individuals with severe osteoarthritis require joint replacement surgery to achieve better quality of life, less pain and more joint function. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the guideline for knee and hip replacement is to receive surgery within 26 weeks. In New Brunswick in 2023, only 38% of knee replacement patients and 42% of hip replacement patients were treated within that guideline and fell below the Canadian average. This deeply impacts the lives of New Brunswick residents with osteoarthritis who require these surgeries.**

**Will your government take steps to ensure timely, specialized care for New Brunswick residents struggling with osteoarthritis, including joint replacement surgery wait times that are within medically recommended guidelines?**

The Green Party recognizes the critical need for timely, specialized care for New Brunswick residents suffering from osteoarthritis, particularly regarding joint replacement surgeries. Our government will prioritize reducing wait times to align with the medically recommended guidelines of 26 weeks for knee and hip replacements.

5. **Many Canadians are positively adapting to virtual care. A majority of respondents in a 2021 Arthritis Consumer Experts Survey reported they believe virtual care could save costs in the healthcare system and improve access to specialists and timeliness of test results. However, respondents who identified as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour were over 3 times more likely to report difficulties using virtual care services.**

**What will your government do to ensure the continuation, improvement, and expansion of virtual care for all New Brunswick residents – both patients and health care professionals – and ensure access is equitable to all?**



The Green Party is committed to enhancing virtual care access for all New Brunswick residents, ensuring that it is equitable and effective for diverse communities. We will invest in the necessary technology and training to support both patients and healthcare professionals in using virtual care platforms. To address the disparities faced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, we will conduct outreach and engagement initiatives tailored to these communities, providing resources and support to overcome barriers to access. Additionally, we will work to improve internet connectivity in underserved areas, ensuring that everyone has reliable access to virtual healthcare services.