



May 13, 2018

Cheryl Koeth
Founder and President
Arthritis Consumer Experts

Dear Ms. Koeth,

Thank you for reaching out to Ontario's New Democrats on behalf of the Arthritis Consumer Experts, and by extension, the members of the arthritis community that your organization represents.

Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP believe that Ontario is at its best when everyone can live good lives and when nobody is excluded from their community. That means making sure we're accommodating the distinct needs and strengths of all Ontarians — with the lifelong supports that allow everyone to thrive.

We know that after the drastic cuts of the Conservative years — and after 15 years of neglect, spending freezes, and cuts under the Liberals — our health care system is falling short of what Ontarians need. We also know that it doesn't have to be this way — we can change Ontario's health care system for the better, so the arthritis community and all Ontarians have access to high-quality care.

We are committed to working with our partners in the arthritis community — including advocacy groups, experts, and people living with arthritis — to determine the best way to move forward with arthritis care in Ontario. We want to ensure that publicly delivered arthritis care is high quality, standardized, and accessible to meet the needs of everyone in the community.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP have committed to several historic investments in health care. While the Liberal government's OHIP+ program has left millions of people without prescription drug coverage, an NDP government will make Ontario the first province with universal pharmacare by 2020 — so every Ontarian can get the medication they need. It will mean lower costs, less worrying, and better health for everyone. Unlike the Liberal government's plan, nobody will be excluded. Pharmacare will begin with universal coverage for approximately 125 essential medicines — chosen through an independent process led by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs. We will work to expand this list as quickly as possible.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will also launch the largest expansion of community-governed non-profit health care Ontario has ever seen. We will increase the base funding for these centres by 5 per cent (\$30 million) and ensure that ongoing funding increases with inflation. We will also 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 yet have one. With these commitments, we will ensure that Ontarians across the province – including members of the arthritis community – have access to publicly-funded health programs and services wherever they live.

We also believe that no one should have to wait years for the surgery they need. By increasing funding to hospitals by 5.3 per cent and ensuring staffing levels are adequate, we will allow hospitals to remove arbitrary annual caps that force surgery cancellations every year.

The reality in Ontario is that First Nations and Indigenous people still 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. In partnership with First Nations, Andrea Horwath and the NDP are committed to providing better health care services in every community. We will double Ontario's investment in the First Nations Health Action Plan, providing at least \$209 million per year, starting in 2019. We anticipate that our doubled investment will support health care programs designed and implemented by First Nations, increase physician days in communities, and expand primary care teams as well as home and community care service and telemedicine.

Once again, we thank you for reaching out with your important questions. We look forward to getting to work, including increasing access to arthritis care in Ontario.

Best,

Ontario's New Democrats