

Cheryl Koehn
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Dear Ms. Koehn,

Thank you for forwarding me your Leaders Survey entitled “Share your plan for arthritis prevention, treatment and care in Newfoundland and Labrador.” I am grateful for this opportunity to detail how a government under my leadership would help improve the quality of life for those who have arthritis and take preventive action where possible.

Question 1: What will your government do to bring a high quality, accessible, standardized evidence-based model of arthritis care for all Newfoundland & Labrador residents?

In the preamble to your question you stated “Where you live can be more important in determining treatment than how sick or disabled you are.” This is an unfortunate reality and a reflection of how broken our health care system is.

I recently announced a policy of province wide primary health care teams. These health care teams will be available in all regions of the area and provide compassionate and continuous care to all residents of the province. Health care teams will increase access to health care. I anticipate that in increasing access to health care, we will be able to better provide access to arthritis care as these health care teams can liaise directly with rheumatologists.

I also believe in high quality, standardized care based on the best medical evidence possible. With this in mind, I will direct my Minister of Health and Community Services to work with leading experts to ensure that our physicians and health care providers have a model of arthritis care which works for the residents of this province. This may include training those in our health care teams to provide community based treatment and preventive medicines.

Question 2: What will your government do to ensure the continuation, improvement, and expansion of virtual care for all Newfoundland & Labrador residents – both patients and health care professionals?

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how virtual care can work. However, we can improve on the service and use virtual care with in-person care to provide the best possible care to residents.

We will further expand the use of virtual care technologies that allow patients to access appropriate care in any region of the province. Your postal code will not determine your access to care or your quality of care. We will ensure supports are in place to help those who do not use technology to continue to access appropriate care in-person.

Our primary health care teams will be able to utilize virtual care to connect patients with specialists, reducing the need to travel and reducing long wait-times. A patient and a primary health care team member can be located in the resident’s community and connect virtually with the specialist in another location.

To help this process, we will ensure that all health care providers will be able to use the Electronic Medical Record to improve the flow of information. We will also ensure patients have better access to their own medical record by working with the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI).

Question 3: What will your government do to improve the Province's ranking on the ACE Report Card?

As you noted 28 medications, including 9 for inflammatory arthritis, are currently "under review". If I am elected Premier on February 13th, I will immediately ask for a status update and ask for a decision to be made on these medications. We cannot let decisions linger in a review period while individuals wait for answers.

Question 4: What will your government do to improve the uptake of biosimilars and will you commit to reinvest those savings to support additional medication listings and improve patient coverage?

A PC government will work with medical professionals to determine how biosimilars can be best used in clinical practice. Any savings which occurs as a result of using biosimilars will be reinvested in our health care system to improve the quality of health care for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, including those who suffer from arthritis.

Question 5: What will your government do to improve the healthcare and lives of Indigenous peoples living with arthritis in Newfoundland and Labrador?

I believe is collaboration. A PC Government, under my leadership, will work with medical professionals and our Indigenous partners in providing arthritis care for Indigenous peoples. I hope that we can work together to implement a plan with specific actions to improve the quality of life for Indigenous individuals who have arthritis.

Primary health care teams in our Indigenous communities can help to provide preventive care and early treatment of arthritis.

Additionally, I believe that we can all work together to promote healthy lifestyle choices which can lead to better outcomes – not just in our Indigenous communities but in our whole province.

Conclusion

Thank you once again for giving me this opportunity. As I noted, I believe in working together. If you wish to provide any additional information on arthritis and its treatment and prevention, please do so. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Ches Crosbie
Leader
Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador