



May 25, 2022

Arthritis Consumer Experts
#210-1529 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6J 1R1

Dear Arthritis Consumer Experts,

Thank you for your letter regarding arthritis prevention, treatment and care in Ontario. The Ontario Liberal Party is committed to advancing high quality, accessible and evidence-based arthritis care for all Ontario residents.

The Ontario Liberal plan, [*A Place to Grow*](#), includes a commitment to make the option for virtual care – video, phone, email and text visits – with primary care providers permanent and universal when appropriate while also keeping the option for in-person care. We need to improve access to internet while driving down costs through greater competition – leveraging existing public fibre assets to expand small, municipal or community-owned networks. Expanding these and other networks, along with investing in low Earth orbit satellites, will get affordable, high-speed internet to every Ontario household and business by 2025, including First Nations reserves. To further help close the digital divide across Ontario, we'll require the Ontario government and the broader public sector to donate any surplus devices to communities and families in need.

An Ontario Liberal led government would invest \$1 billion over two years to clear the surgical and diagnostic backlog that has built up as a result of the impact of the pandemic. This \$1 billion investment would provide additional capacity, empowering hospitals to operate significantly above pre-pandemic volumes and expanding operating room usage to include evenings and weekends.

As well, we would establish and publish maximum wait times for all surgeries, including knee and hip replacements, and return to pre-pandemic wait times for those above the maximum by the end of 2022. Finally, we propose to create a centralized electronic surgical waitlist that would require all specialists to utilize e-referrals. This will shorten wait times as well as maximize scheduling efficiency.

Ontario should be proud of its publicly-funded health care system, but necessary medications remain a major cost – especially for those paying out-of-pocket. We will advocate with our federal partners for a national pharmacare plan. In the meantime, we'll ensure all Ontarians have access to prescription drug coverage by enrolling anyone without an employer benefits plan in our new portable benefits plan – including self-employed, gig, contract and creative workers. Anyone not captured by the portable benefits plan will receive drug coverage through OHIP+ or the Ontario Drug Benefit program.

An Ontario Liberal led government will be committed to reconciliation and building a true partnership with Indigenous communities. We are committed to implementing the Truth and



Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. This will be accomplished by working with and learning from Indigenous peoples and First Nations.

Thank you again for writing and your advocacy on behalf of people with arthritis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Del Duca".

Steven Del Duca
Leader
Ontario Liberal Party