

## **Questionnaire Response: Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO)**

**1. Evidence shows that a very sick patient without high quality care can cost the province \$30,000/year, but the same patient with access to interprofessional family care only costs the province \$12,000/year. Will your party support strengthening our family care teams and enhancing our capacity to care for more patients?**

Ontario Liberals have made significant strides in improving access to quality, evidence-based primary care, across the province. The introduction and expansion of the numerous primary care, team-based models, including but not limited to Family Health Teams (FHT) and Nurse Practitioner Led Clinics (NPLC) has had positive impact on both access and health care outcomes for Ontarians.

The emphasis on prevention, 24 hour access, continuity of care, and chronic disease management has meant that more Ontarians are getting care close to home, and fewer have to visit our hospitals. Not only is this better for patient outcomes, it is better value for money in the health care system.

The Wynne government remains fully committed to strengthening family care teams across the province, and have committed to a primary care guarantee for all Ontarians by 2018. The Ontario Liberal government has also made significant investments across the health care system, from home and community care to hospitals, to ensure that people who need it can get the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Both opposition parties voted against the 2014 Budget which would have further advanced that approach, putting all of our effective transformation strategies at risk. And worse, the PC Party has committed to firing 100,000 public sector employees. Not only will this put our economy at risk, but it will compromise the advances we have made in the health care system, and make the jobs of those who remain even harder.

**2. Despite having family care teams in 206 communities across Ontario, 3 out of 4 Ontarians still do not have access to the benefits of interprofessional family care. If elected, what will you do to expand this care model to ALL Ontarians?**

Ontario Liberals are committed to working with our partners, across the system to expand availability to interprofessional primary care, wherever possible. We understand the value of this model, and see the benefits for the system and for patients. Our track record of significant expansion of a number of interprofessional models, including Community Health Centres, FHTs, and NPLCs is proof that we believe in this model, and would like to replicate it where possible.

It is important to acknowledge that in many cases, the challenge to access to interprofessional care is not the number of providers available, but the distribution of providers available. That is why we will continue working with our health human resources capacity across the province to ensure that Ontarians have access to the best quality care, wherever possible.

**3. Interprofessional family care teams are committed to optimizing health outcomes for patients and populations, meeting patient and public expectations, and supporting a sustainable health system. What will your party do to advance the capacity of family care teams to capture and track the information they need to achieve these goals?**

Ontario Liberals know that when you need to improve something, you need the right information. That is why we were, for example, the first government to start measuring wait times across the province. With this first step, we were then successful in bringing those wait times down by 50 per cent, taking Ontario from worst in the country, to first in the country on wait times.

We are committed to bringing this same rigour to information in the primary care sector. The use of Electronic Medical Records (EMR) is an excellent tool for capturing and tracking information so that our providers can give the best possible care to their patients.

In 2005-06, only 770,000 Ontarians were benefiting from EMRs today, nearly 70 per cent of Ontarians have access to an EMR – that's more than 9.5 million Ontarians. Over 73 per cent of our primary care physicians and 54 per cent of our specialists in communities now use EMRs. In addition, 325,000 people benefit from EMRs at Community Health Centres across the province.

If given another mandate to govern the province, Ontario Liberals will continue to work toward every Ontarian having an EMR, with the goal of achieving this target by 2015. With this information available, we are confident that we will be able to improve cost-effectiveness in the system and improve patient outcomes.

**4. Interprofessional care teams struggle to retain health professionals due to higher salaries being paid in hospitals, community care access centres, public health units and other settings. How will your party help interprofessional care teams recruit and retain more health care professionals in order to expand better care to more Ontarians?**

We recognize that over the years, an inequity has emerged in compensation between those practicing in community settings and those practicing in the acute sector. Ontario Liberals are committed to working with you, and other health care partners to take the necessary steps to reduce this inequity, as we know that recruitment and retention in the community-based, primary care sector will be good for the employees working in it, and the outcomes for patients in Ontario.

**5. In your 2014 campaign platform you state that part of your 10-year plan is to support family health by guaranteeing everyone in Ontario has access to a primary care provider. How do you plan to use interprofessional family care teams to fulfill this promise?**

Ontario Liberals have made significant improvements in primary care, both to improve access and attachment to a provider, and the use of interprofessional care teams – over 93 per cent of Ontarians now have access to a primary care provider, across the province. But we know that getting everyone access to a primary care provider is the best way to use resources wisely in the system, and improve patient outcomes.

We have a multi-pronged approach to achieving this goal. We will:

- Work closely with organizations such as the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, and others, to address concerns about recruitment and retention of providers in the sector.
- Build on the success of our 54 Community Health Links, which are providing care-coordinators to help patients with complex needs to navigate the system, including improved access to primary care.

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- Develop specific, targeted strategies in northern and rural communities.
- Work with our partners on enrolling more patients to existing primary care models across the province.

Since 2003, when Ontario's primary care system was rife with challenges, we have taken critical and significant steps to improve the situation. By continuing forward with our Action Plan for Health Care, we are confident that we will be able to deliver on this commitment, building on the successes that we've achieved, together, over the last 10 years.

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