

June 6, 2014

Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario – 2014 Election Questionnaire

Ontario NDP Responses

- 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 inter-professional 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?***

The Ontario NDP is strongly committed to strengthening our healthcare system and to building on innovative models for care delivery. Aside from improving funding for healthcare resources, we are also committed to hiring 250 additional nurse practitioners who will increase capacity across the system. We will open 50 new 24-hour family health clinics in underserved communities and attract more doctors.

- 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 inter-professional family care. If elected, what will you do to expand this care model to ALL Ontarians?***

We know that high quality primary care is the fundamental base for the best public healthcare system for Ontarians. That's why it's our top priority. We also know that interdisciplinary teams can improve healthcare outcomes and delivery and we have included this principle in our model for our 50 new 24-hour family health clinics.

Family health clinics will give patients an alternative to ERs for non-urgent medical needs. Our family health clinics can offer flexibility for community-specific needs. We will also extend their hours so patients can access primary care around the clock, instead of waiting in cramped ERs.

Though each clinic will be comprised of the professionals best suited to each community, we envision bringing together doctors (from a variety of disciplines), registered nurses and nurse practitioners, psychologists, dieticians, early childhood development specialists, physiotherapists, Aboriginal elders and others as appropriate. We are also committing to hiring 250 additional nurse practitioners to improve patient care quality and timeliness.

Currently, only about four per cent of Ontarians have access to family health clinics (or "community health centres"), but the Ontario NDP recognize the tremendous value these clinics in terms of promoting holistic health and providing proactive care and counselling to avoid a deterioration of people's health which can lead to more costly, time intensive or invasive treatment.

We also know that, aside from their role in preventative healthcare, family health clinics can relieve pressure from other parts of the healthcare system by ensuring that underserved Ontarians have access to primary care and that all Ontarians have options after-hours besides ERs. We are committing

to build 50 new family health clinics across the province over four years. The 250,000 additional patients who will be served at these clinics will cut the number of Ontarians without access to primary care by a quarter. This will also cut down on the roughly half of ER visits in the province each year which are for non-urgent needs.

- 3. Inter-professional 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?***

The Ontario NDP is committed to working with healthcare professionals and stakeholders to improve our healthcare system. As we introduce new family health clinics and eliminate wait lists for long-term care and homecare, we will work with stakeholders across the system to build collaboration and effective models to enhance patient care and communication amongst healthcare providers.

We know that years of misplaced priorities have created an inefficient and wasteful system that doesn't deliver for Ontarians. We are committed to investing adequately to create a high quality, public healthcare system that is accessible for all Ontarians. We will make simple, targeted investments to get the money where it needs to go – the frontlines.

- 4. Inter-professional 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 inter-professional care teams recruit and retain more health care professionals in order to expand better care to more Ontarians?***

The Ontario NDP is aware of salary discrepancies amongst healthcare professionals practicing in different settings. We will work together to address this issue to ensure that all healthcare professionals are compensated fairly and that they are appropriately distributed across care settings in the province.

- 5. In your 2014 campaign platform, you state that you will add 50 new 24-hour Family Health Clinics. How will this commitment affect the current model we have in place? Will it have a positive or negative effect on inter-professional family care teams?***

As described above, the Ontario NDP's 50 new family health clinics will strengthen capacity for and implementation of inter-professional models of primary care.

We recognize the importance of continuity of care and team-based patient focused care and that is a central component of our planned new family health clinics. We also understand that to be high quality, care must be comprehensive and access must be timely. That's why our plan is about making simple, targeted investments to improve the efficiency of the system and to make sure that all patients are getting the kind of care when they need it.