



Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador

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Dr. Janine Hubbard
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Dear Dr. Hubbard:

Thank you for your letter requesting our answers to seven questions about access to psychological services in Newfoundland and Labrador. I will answer in in turn.

1) What is your party's position on improving access to psychological services?

Our answers to your first, third and fifth questions overlap, and should be seen in the context of our commitments to improve access to healthcare services, mental health and addictions care, improved violence prevention, improved correctional services, improved inclusion of persons with disabilities, poverty reduction and other initiatives. All of these initiatives will result in improved access to care. Please see the answers to your third and fifth questions for specific examples.

2) Does your party platform contain anything related to matching the Federal Government's announcement by increasing the amount covered for psychological services from \$500 to at least \$2000 for all provincial employees?

Nor specifically. But the absence of a specific mention should not be taken as an unwillingness to consider this. Taking advantage of matching funds is a sensible approach. Improving access to psychological services for all provincial employees is a sensible approach. This falls in line with other commitments to improve the working environment, such as by addressing workplace harassment and violence, including persons with disabilities, and enhancing mental health services, among other initiatives.

If we are elected to govern, we look forward to hearing from you and working with you on this issue.

3) What will your party do to ensure Timely Access to Psychology Services for those who need lengthier (e.g.12-20 session) evidence-based psychological interventions for more complex psychological issues.

We will not cut health funding. In fact, we commit to grow it and to manage this funding in ways that improve access to care for patients in all areas of the province while improving outcomes. This can be done – but only by working collaboratively with all providers. See the answer to Question #5 for more on this.

Mental health and addictions will be given equal status to other areas of health care. We will explore opportunities to improve access to psychiatrists and psychotherapy. We will examine ways to complement the Doorways walk-in mental health service program by using telehealth more effectively to offer online services. This will improve access to non-emergency mental health services and counseling.

We will ensure the challenges of mental health and addictions treatment are subject to intense critical review and evolve in line with best practices. We will improve access to mental health care and addictions treatment as per the recommendations of the report of the all-party committee on mental health and addictions. We will consult on the most effective measures we can take to improve access to mental health and addictions services, including Suboxone treatment, and specialty appointments dealing with issues of mental health and addictions.

We will ensure the mental health and addictions care of inmates of our correctional centres reflects the recommendations of the Jesso report on inmate deaths.

We will open up a broader public discussion about community drug issues, and work collaboratively with policing agencies, the health care sector, community groups, frontline professionals and others to find solutions that will protect our people and make our communities safer.

Video Lottery Terminal line games are associated with high risk of problematic gambling behaviours. We will require the Atlantic Lottery Corporation to conform VLT line games to consumer protection standards. These games will remain available to players in existing venues.

We will work cooperatively with Indigenous communities on the wide range of issues that concern Indigenous people and that may overlap various areas of jurisdiction, including health care and other matters.

Poverty stymies the development of children and youth, denies people opportunities to fulfill their potential and undermines people's health. The Poverty Reduction Strategy of previous PC administrations was lauded nationally for bringing poverty levels in Newfoundland and Labrador from the highest in the country to the lowest within a decade. We will begin the process of developing a new Poverty Reduction Strategy to build on what we started.

One of the reasons for the poor outcomes of so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is the conditions in which they live. Social enterprises such as the Gathering Place serve many people who have few options in life. Many find it difficult to make choices that are in the best long-term interests of their health. In terms of housing, nutrition and medical care, they are not living as healthy as they want to be or ought to be living. Many who end up in the health care system are in poorer shape and have poorer outcomes because their circumstances have not been conducive to healthy living. They pay in terms of the quality of their lives; however, we all pay, fiscally and morally, when we allow these circumstances to continue. We need a poverty reduction strategy that lifts people out of dire circumstances and promotes wellness. We also need a lens on our health care system to identify problems like this and find solutions.

We will enhance our care for seniors and for K-12 students.

To determine precisely how services will be enhanced, we will work collaboratively with healthcare providers such as the Association of Psychology of Newfoundland and Labrador. Your presence at the table will ensure a stronger healthcare system that better serves people and produces better outcomes.

4) Does your party platform contain measures that will ensure ongoing funding & support for the PsyD Program at Memorial University?

Our party platform does not contain specific measures to ensure ongoing funding and support for the PsyD Program at Memorial University. That is not to say we do not support this program. Rather, Memorial University best serves the people of Newfoundland and Labrador by maintaining its autonomy in governing its programming so as to maintain its academic integrity. We work collaboratively with the university community to advance the best interests of the people of the province. We are proud of the university's reputation across a wide swatch of degree programs. Our platform contains a general commitment of strong support for Memorial University. As we state: Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic will play an enormous role in securing a strong and sustainable future for Newfoundland and Labrador. Both institutions ought to be recognized nationally and internationally more and more as centres of excellence in academic programming, research and innovation. Competitiveness in a changing world requires investment. We will work with Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic to attract investment and partners from

around the world. Such investments will sustain the programs that the Association of Psychology of Newfoundland and Labrador is advocating for.

5) What is your party's commitment to improving access to psychological services, particularly gaps in Health Psychology such as Diabetes, Oncology and Bariatric Surgery?

Our general commitments to improve health care include commitments to improve access to psychological services. We will establish the Premier's Task Force on Health Care to work with all health care stakeholders including residents, frontline workers, health care providers and health care administrators, with a mandate to improve the way health care is delivered in this province. The Task Force will be, not top-down, but consultative. It will bring a level of independence and a broad perspective on the best practices in the country. You will be at the table. This process will ensure the gaps are identified and address.

To complement the Task Force, we will establish a NL Quality Health Council. When decisions about treatment are made on a foundation of solid evidence, patients benefit and health care funding is used more effectively. This Council will be responsible for interpreting evidence and proposing follow-up actions to ensure the province's health care investment decisions are made in the best interests of patients. The Council will be an independent body that consistently reports on outcomes, similar to the financial Auditor General but focused on clinical outcomes. Supporting the objectives of the collaborative effort between Quality of Care NL and Choosing Wisely NL, the Council will focus on ensuring the right treatments get to the right patients at the right time.

We will introduce an "accountable care model" to give people better access to physicians and other care providers. This delivery model will see the development of primary healthcare teams of physicians, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and dieticians, etc. An accountable care model will encourage care providers to be innovative in the way they deliver care as a team.

Our efforts will be focused on improving access by working more closely with health care providers in the spirit of collaboration and innovation, with the primary focus always being in improving patient services in order to improve patient outcomes.

6) Does your party plan to improve access to psychological services for adolescents and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

The IQ70 criterion remains in place, denying services to people with autism. We will remove it. We will develop an Autism Strategy that emphasizes early assessment and diagnosis; early and effective intervention with programs that are proven to work; and lifelong support. We have allocated \$2.5 million to make this happen.

We will also update the strategy on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in collaboration with a variety of provincial organizations. We will focus on improving opportunities for full participation in our province, lowering barriers to employment, improving housing and home support options, improving transportation, improving access to sports and recreation, and making education inclusive, personalized and meaningful. We affirm that persons with disabilities have the right to make their own decisions and to use support if they choose. In partnership with organizations representing persons with disabilities, we will strive to apply the general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which are: Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons; Non-discrimination; Full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; Equality of opportunity; Accessibility; Equality between men and women; Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

7) Will your party commit to meeting National ratio Standards for Educational Psychologists in Newfoundland & Labrador's Schools?

The Collins Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes recommended a review of roles and responsibilities of specialist personnel, such as educational psychologists, speech language pathologists, and guidance counsellors, with the aim to improve access through improved service delivery to children and youth. We have committed to follow through in implementing the sound recommendations of the Task Force, and have allowed \$13.0 million to make these reforms happen.

Other commitments in our Blue Book regard guidance counseling, career planning, mental health counseling and other interventions that make a difference in children's lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our Party's positions. You may find more information and context in our Blue Book at <https://crosbie2019.ca/blue-book/>

Sincerely,



Ches Crosbie
Leader of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador