



Making Sure Every Canadian Has Access to a Family Doctor or Primary Health Team

Canadians are proud to have access to one of the best health care systems in the world, a universal, public system that proved to be invaluable during our fight against COVID-19.

From day one of the pandemic, the Liberal government made significant investments to ensure Canadians have the health care they need. Eight out of every 10 dollars spent in response to COVID-19 came from the Liberal government. From investing in pandemic surge capacity, public health care and the Safe Restart Agreement, to moving forward on pharmacare and procuring vaccines for every single Canadian, we have had Canadians' backs. Moving forward, there's even more we can do to build a stronger health care system for everyone.

Because more needs to be done. Even prior to the pandemic, waitlists were growing for vital surgeries and services. Nearly 5 million Canadians reported not having access to a family doctor and 3.2% of Canadians were waiting for treatment in 2020.

This backlog in essential health services only worsened because of the pandemic. And although COVID-19 has lit the spark of transformation in how health care can be accessed and delivered virtually, filling the gap to ensure all Canadians have access to a family doctor or primary health team, regardless of where they live, should be a fundamental tenet of our universal, public health system.

In order to bring forward a healthier Canada for all Canadians, a re-elected Liberal government will work with the provinces and territories to rebuild the primary care system by:

- Immediately investing \$6 billion - on top of \$4 billion already committed - to support the elimination of health system waitlists; and
- Facilitating the hiring of 7,500 family doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners with a \$3.2 billion investment over 4 years beginning in 2022;
- Providing \$400 million over 4 years to expand virtual health care services to deliver primary care to Canadians from wherever they want.

A re-elected Liberal government will also invest in recruiting health professionals to rural and remote regions by:

- Increasing student loan forgiveness to health professionals opting to work in rural communities, and expanding eligibility for this program to a significantly wider range of health professionals; and
- Offering a tax incentive to these health professionals to reduce the costs of setting up a practice in a rural or remote community.

These new investments are in addition to the \$9 billion over 5 years that a re-elected Liberal government will commit to deliver better care for Canada's seniors, by working with the provinces and territories.

Eliminating the Backlog of Surgeries and Procedures

Too many Canadians had their care deferred during the pandemic, resulting in a significant backlog of surgeries, procedures, and diagnostics that will take time and resources to eliminate.

But waitlists from before the pandemic continue to persist as well. Specialist physicians have reported a marked increase in referral times from a general practitioner during the past year, and patients are waiting longer for important services like diagnostics including MRIs and ultrasounds.

We will immediately invest \$6 billion – on top of \$4 billion already committed – to support the elimination of health system waitlists.

We will negotiate agreements with every province and territory to ensure that Canadians who are waiting for care get the treatment they need as quickly as possible and the primary care system is positioned for the future to deliver the care outcomes that Canadians need.

Hiring 7,500 family doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners

We will continue to improve Canada's universal, public health care system by ensuring every Canadian has access to a family doctor or primary health team by providing \$3.2 billion for the hiring of 7,500 new family doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners.

Expanding Virtual Health Care Services

We will provide \$400 million over 4 years to build on the growing demand for virtual care that arose during the pandemic. We will invest additional dollars to cover digital infrastructure and other system improvements to support more virtual care, so that Canadians can access things like virtual medical consultations with doctors and nurses or remote monitoring.

This funding builds on the \$240.5 million the Liberal government dedicated to increasing access to virtual care in the pandemic, and will help ensure that the fast acceleration of care into virtual models is thoughtful and delivers the quality of care Canadians deserve.

Increasing Rural and Underserved Communities' Access to Health Care

Rural Canadians have significantly less access to doctors than Canadians in urban settings.

We will increase the Canada Student Loan Program's maximum debt relief for participating professionals by 50%, from \$40,000 to up to \$60,000 over 5 years for family doctors, residents in family medicine, nurse practitioners, or nurses.

We will also expand the program's current narrow list of eligible professionals to include the full workforce a community needs to succeed. This will include adding dentists, pharmacists, dental hygienists, midwives, social workers, psychologists, teachers, and early childhood educators to the program. Nurses, nurse practitioners, residents, and family doctors will continue to qualify, and will benefit from greater debt relief.

As we do this we will also undertake a review to ensure that communities that are indeed rural are fully eligible for the program.

Increasing Health Practices in Rural Communities

Building stronger access to rural healthcare takes more than just getting professionals into a community. To help these professionals establish their practice we will also provide a one-time tax incentive to enable them to deduct up to \$15,000 in income cumulatively during their first 3 years of practice. This will help with initial expenses related to setting up a practice, reaching out to clients, and integrating into the community.