

August 9th, 2021

Angus Campbell

Wayves Magazine

Dear Angus,

Thank you for your questions regarding healthcare for members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Please see our responses below.

1. It is my understanding that your party supports paying for the cost of PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) medicine used to prevent someone getting HIV.

If your party forms government, when will you implement this policy?

We all share a desire to reduce the transmission of HIV and AIDS infection. The Nova Scotia Liberal government will continue efforts to ensure we have accurate information to make informed decisions about the best path forward. The Department of Health and Wellness is currently reviewing options to this end. Their considerations are being informed in part by stakeholder consultations that have already taken place.

Currently PrEP is covered under provincial Pharmacare options formula in 2018. Eligibility criteria is based on national guidelines and the national Canadian Drug Expert Committee recommendation. People who are concerned about their risk of HIV infection should speak to a primary care provider so they can be assessed to determine whether they are eligible for PrEP. Prescriptions for PrEP can be filled at community pharmacies across the province.

2. prideHealth, which is managed by NS Health and the IWK, “works to improve access to health services which are safe, coordinated, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate.” Since its revival a decade ago it has been frequently understaffed and their voice mail currently states that there is only one employee fulfilling both the coordinator and navigator roles. It is unclear whether either of these positions is full-time.

What would your party do to ensure that people from my community are better, and continuously, served by prideHealth?

Healthcare needs to be accessible to everyone and 2SLGBTQIA+ people need to feel safe and properly cared for in a hospital or clinical setting. The Nova Scotia Health Authority launched prideHealth to improve access to health services that are safe,

coordinated, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

We commit to conversations with members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to improve the focus on anti-oppressive and 2SLGBTQIA+ comprehensive training, education, and resources for long-term care. The Community of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (2SLGBTQ) Students in Nursing (C2SLGBTQSN) is a group within the School of Nursing at Dalhousie University created by and for students who identify as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Groups like these have a profound impact on representation and challenging the status quo within institutions of higher learning.

A re-elected Liberal government will continue to listen to the needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and strive toward building a healthcare system that works for everyone.

3. Continuing Care includes Long Term Care (LTC) and Home Care. Continuing Care Assistants (CCAs) are necessary for both but there appears to be a focus on recruitment for LTC. Most Nova Scotians want to remain in their homes as long as possible but will require varying levels of care given by their family/friend caregivers and other home supports

What is your party proposing to recruit CCAs?

What is your policy for supporting unpaid caregivers looking after someone at home?

Nova Scotia's budget for continuing care supports, including both home care and long-term care now stands at over \$1 billion annually, the highest level of investment in history.

Our Liberal government recently invested in enhancements to the Caregiver Benefit Program, extending access to services that allow Nova Scotians to stay in their homes longer while receiving appropriate care. We have also improved access to Home Care services by adjusting the low-income threshold for home care. This made supports for low-income seniors more affordable, and allows them to remain in their homes to receive care.

Our government has provided an additional \$3.05 million per year for these programs to improve access to home care for an additional 1600 Nova Scotians per year. The Rankin government will also establish a province-wide advisory council of long-term care residents, home care clients and their families and caregivers to advise on improved policies and procedures for continuing care in Nova Scotia.

In addition to increasing wages and investing in workplace safety initiatives, the Rankin Government will support our continuing care workforce by investing \$500,000 annually to cover the cost of tuition and books at NSCC for CCAs who wish to upgrade their

credentials and are committed to working in the long-term care sector. Our government will collaborate with our partners at NSCC to establish 30 new seats within the LPN program that will be reserved for the Pathway to Progress Program. This program will be available to CCAs who have practiced for five years and will sign a return of service agreement committing to continued practice in long-term care for an additional five years.

The establishment of the Pathway to Progress bursary will provide opportunities for CCAs who are committed to working in long term care to advance in their careers, while also improving recruitment and retention for CCAs and LPNs who are committed to supporting our loved ones in the continuing care sector.

4. How do you feel Public Health and the provincial government have handled the COVID-19 pandemic?

What would your party have done differently, and in the case of the Liberals, do you see any areas for improvement?

For advice regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to listen to public health officials and Dr. Strang. COVID-19 has highlighted several areas that were not ready for the unexpected impacts of the pandemic. We have learned a great deal from the past 18 months and we have already made numerous changes as a result.

We have made massive new investments in long-term care and home care. Nova Scotia's budget for continuing care supports now stands at over \$1 billion annually, the highest level of investment in history.

COVID-19, also demonstrated the capacity of all Nova Scotians, to unite, support one another, and achieve incredible outcomes.

The need for affordable childcare was highlighted during the peak of the pandemic, especially on single-parents and women. This motivated our government to forge ahead with a truly game changing federal-provincial agreement on childcare and early learning that will see families paying an average of \$10 a day for childcare by 2026.

These are just two examples that together have profound social and economic impact for all Nova Scotians. There are many other areas that need improvement, this will take a great deal of work which our Liberal party is ready to continue with.

5. COVID-19 follow up

Just over 76% of Nova Scotians have received vaccinations (66% have received both doses).

If your party is elected, how will you encourage all eligible Nova Scotians to get vaccinated such that we can protect one another?

What do you say to anti-vaxxers?

A Liberal government will be proactive in exploring a provincial vaccine certificate for going to restaurants, shops, gyms, and other businesses. The ScotiaPass would allow you to attend events without fear, while not putting people's health at risk from dangerous COVID variants.

We encourage everyone to get the vaccine so we can avoid a fourth wave and continue in our phased reopening plan. We understand that some Nova Scotians have questions about vaccination, we think that the best approach to this is working with public health officials to help educate and encourage these individuals.