

Kelly Wilson Cull
Director, Advocacy
Canadian Cancer Society
By email: kelly.cull@cancer.ca

1. If elected, will your Party make the Nova Scotia Palliative Care Strategy a priority and fund the strategy?

Nova Scotia's palliative care strategy which was introduced by the Nova Scotia Liberal government in May 2014, sets the direction for more collaboration and capacity in the health system and communities to care for Nova Scotians as they approach the end of their lives. That is why we developed the strategy with our stakeholders that is moving us towards integrated, community-based palliative care programs and services.

All Nova Scotians deserve access to an integrated, culturally competent, quality palliative care in a setting of their choice. We must address a full range of care needs for people facing the end of life, including their physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs. We must also consider the needs of their families once their loved one has passed away. There is still work to be done however, we are continuing to make progress.

The Nova Scotia government is investing \$1 million annually for a five-room dedicated palliative care unit on the South Shore. Also, the new unit at Fishermen's Memorial Hospital in Lunenburg will provide team-based palliative care, including end-of-life care, symptom management and support for patients and their families. It is expected to open fall 2021.

Everyone deserves respectful, integrated palliative care at the end of life. Dedicated palliative care rooms and services will provide comfort and quality care to patients and their families.

The Liberal Government has invested more than \$4 billion in spending for new hospitals, emergency care centres, and community health centres that will completely transform the way healthcare is delivered in Nova Scotia. These represent the largest healthcare redevelopment projects in the province's history, which when completed will provide patients across the province with state-of-the-art facilities and the quality of care they need and deserve when and where they need it.

2. COVID-19 and cancer care The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to working with provincial governments and the cancer community on a fully funded plan to address all backlogs in cancer care from COVID-19 as well as the influx of new or late-stage cancer diagnosis forthcoming. Question: If elected, will your Party commit to fully funding a plan to address all backlogs in cancer care from COVID-19 as well as the influx of new or late-stage cancer diagnosis forthcoming?

The Liberal government is committed to providing Nova Scotians with the cancer care and support they need closer to home, with investments totalling \$18 million for ongoing supports in cancer care. We are also investing in the largest redevelopment of our healthcare system.

The Halifax Infirmity expansion includes a cancer care centre with radiation therapy and ambulatory cancer clinics, an inpatient centre with new operating rooms, critical care beds, inpatient beds, diagnostic services and renal dialysis. It is expected to be completed by 2026. We also intend to invest nearly \$1 million annually to enhance cancer care in Southwestern Nova Scotia. This will cover additional staff, medical supplies, and other supports for patients. Investments span across Nova Scotia, also including a brand new and improved cancer centre in the CBRM Redevelopment Project. The CBRM cancer centre will provide a more comfortable, supportive centre focused on patients and their families. Technology and additional supports under one roof will enhance the quality of care for patients, closer to home, and reduce the number of visits throughout treatment.

While there is still more work to do, these investments will make an impact for patients across Nova Scotia. We are committed to working through the backlog created by the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure timely access to cancer care.

3. Tobacco settlement negotiations The Nova Scotia Government is currently engaged in a lawsuit with the tobacco industry, to recover health care costs associated with tobacco use. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to the inclusion of significant public health measures in the settlement agreement. Question: If elected, will your Party commit to ensuring that any settlement with the tobacco industry include significant public health measures to reduce tobacco use and not just financial compensation?

As negotiation are ongoing, we are not able to comment specifically.

However, Nova Scotia, under the Liberal government, was the first province in Atlantic Canada to introduce a tax on vaping products and among the first in the country to require sales permits. The province has also banned the sale of flavoured vape products and passed legislation to assume regulatory authority over the nicotine content of tobacco, e-cigarettes and other products, protecting youth from potentially hazardous nicotine levels.

Our goal is to prevent more Nova Scotians from taking up smoking. We also encourage Nova Scotians who currently vape or smoke to use proven cessation supports.

4. Expand job protected illness leave The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to extend the length of sickness leave job protection from the current 3 days to at least 26 weeks to align with Employment Insurance sickness benefit. This will help to ensure that those who are facing a life-threatening disease such as cancer can take critical time off work to receive treatment and to heal. Question: If elected, will your Party commit to extending Job Protective Leave from the current 3 days to at least 26 weeks.

Employees may be eligible for a variety of leaves under the Labour Standards Code. While, sick leave rests with the federal government we are open to discussion on how best to support those facing life-threatening diseases.