

Where do the federal political parties stand on health care?

Performance Card Backgrounder | October 15, 2015



	Liberal	NDP	green	Conservative
Drug Plan	2/5	5/5	4/5	0/5
Seniors	5/5	4/5	3/5	0/5
Funding	3/5	5/5	3/5	0/5
HHR	1/5	5/5	1/5	0/5

National Prescription Drug Program

2/5 Liberals

The Liberal Party promised to return to the table with the provinces to negotiate a new Health Accord. Their priorities for a new Health Accord include improving access and reducing costs to prescription drugs. However, there are no specifics for creation of a national prescription drug program.

Canada's Nurses rank the Liberals at 2/5. We are pleased the Liberals would work with provinces and that they mention reducing costs and improving access, however, with no funds or details of how they propose to move the initiative forward and a singular focus on bulk-buying, these initiatives are not enough to achieve full implementation of a national plan.

5/5 NDP

The New Democrats committed to working with the provinces to build a plan that supports universal comprehensive drug coverage. The NDP also committed to delivering \$2.6 billion in new federal funding for universal drug coverage over the next four years, reaching \$1.5 billion annually in 2019/2020. They estimate that their commitment to federal-provincial collaboration in bulk buying and price negotiations could save as much as 30% annually.

Canada's Nurses rank the NDP at 5/5. This is the most significant and comprehensive commitment by any of the parties toward support for universal drug coverage. Commitments include new funding and collaboration with provinces, including pledges to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies, which is a key to lowering costs for Canadians. Achieving a national prescription drug program will require negotiation with the provinces, but with clear commitment and federal funds, these commitments are solid.

4/5 Greens

The Greens have committed to introducing a national prescription drug program that will save Canada up to \$11 billion annually through buying in bulk. Canada is the only developed country in the world with universal health care that does not provide prescription drug coverage – the Greens have promised to correct this.

Canada's Nurses rank the Greens at 4/5. The Green Party has clearly committed to a national prescription drug program and deserve a solid grade for their efforts. The commitment of \$300 million per year may not be enough to compel provincial governments to sign on, but it is almost there.

0/5 Conservatives

The Conservative platform did not contain any support for a national prescription drug program.

Canada's Nurses rank the Conservatives at 0/5. The Conservatives have never favoured a prescription drug plan for Canada and conversely, the two key trade agreements the Conservatives have signed are going to significantly increase drug costs and decrease access for Canadians. Without even agreeing to sit down with provincial governments to discuss health care it seems clear that there is no chance to move forward on this under the Conservatives.

Safe Seniors Strategy

5/5 Liberals

The Liberals put much of their focus on seniors, committing to \$3 billion in funding for home care over the next four years. Further, they committed to \$20 billion in social infrastructure, with a priority on investing in seniors facilities, including long-term care.

Canada's Nurses rank the Liberals at 5/5. The Liberals have proposed a significant amount of funding for seniors, focused on home care. This commitment along with increased infrastructure investments provides the Liberals with full marks on a Safe Seniors Strategy.

4/5 NDP

The New Democrats unveiled a plan to spend \$1.8 billion over four years to help the provinces provide better care for seniors. The party said this funding could expand home care for 41,000 Canadians, add 5,000 nursing home beds and improve palliative care. The party also pledged \$40 million for an Alzheimer's and dementia strategy.

Canada's Nurses rank the NDP at 4/5. The NDP has a strong commitment to seniors and have committed funds to see that commitment forward. Along with their pledge on forging an Alzheimer's and dementia strategy, the NDP deserves credit for their commitments.

3/5 Greens

The Greens shared a plan for seniors, but the plan did not go into detail on offering support for increased funding to create greater opportunities for quality long-term care, palliative care and home care.

Canada's Nurses rank the Greens at 3/5. The Greens have very positive language regarding seniors in their platform and also receive points for their commitment to a national prescription drug plan. Without attached funds to achieve the goals, however, marks had to be withheld.

0/5 Conservatives

The Conservative platform mentions tax breaks and tax credits for seniors, but no specifics were provided focused on improving health care.

Canada's Nurses rank the Conservatives at 0/5. The Conservatives do mention tax breaks and credits that could be used by seniors. These tax breaks, however, do not come close to meeting the needs of all seniors or qualify as a strategy to deal with an aging population. The Conservatives again score the lowest when it comes to health care for seniors.

Strong Federal Funding

3/5 Liberals

The Liberals promised to return to the table with the provinces and develop a new Health Accord. They also expressed their belief that every Canadian deserves access to timely, publicly-funded health care.

Canada's Nurses rank the Liberals at 3/5. The Liberals have committed to a new Health Accord and to negotiating with the provinces on health care. Both are good steps forward and are welcome. There is, however, no funding commitment to back up any new fiscal arrangement with the provinces and no clear commitment to reversing the \$43.5 billion in health transfer reductions implemented by the Conservatives.

5/5 NDP

The NDP have pledged to support Canada's public health care system, and promised to stop unilateral cuts to health care made by the current government.

Canada's Nurses rank the NDP at 5/5. The NDP is the only party to commit to reinstating the 6% escalator clause for health transfers until a new accord is negotiated. They have announced a series of health care initiatives that will come out of the 6% increases, but these initiatives and the funding commitment are positive steps forward to ensure our health care system remains strong.

3/5 Greens

As one of the key tenets of the Green Party's focus on health care, they said they will defend single-payer universal health care. They also promised to bring all parties back to the table for a renewal of the Health Accord.

Canada's Nurses rank the Greens at 3/5. The Greens have committed to a new Health Accord and to negotiating with provinces on health care. Both are good steps forward and are welcome. There is, however, no funding commitment to back up any new fiscal arrangement with the provinces and no clear commitment to reversing the \$43.5 billion in health transfer reductions implemented by the Conservatives.

0/5 Conservatives

The Conservatives have cut the health transfer escalator clause from 6% to 3%, tied to GDP growth. Canada's universal, publicly-funded health care system is being stressed by an aging population and rising costs. There is also limited and targeted funding for health research.

Canada's Nurses rank the Conservatives at 0/5. Unilaterally cutting the escalator amounts, with \$43.5 billion removed from transfers to provinces over the next 8 years, will have massive consequences for our public health care system. While transfers are being reduced costs are rising and the percent of health care covered by federal transfers is being cut dramatically. These changes risk the very notion of a national health care system.

Health Human Resources Plan

1/5 Liberal

The Liberal plan did not release details of an HHR strategy.

Canada's Nurses rank the Liberals 1/5. Even though no specific HHR strategy was identified in the platform, the Liberals' commitment to sit down with provinces to negotiate a new health accord means that HHR will be positively impacted through that process. More federal assistance is needed.

5/5 NDP

The NDP has promised to invest \$300 million to build 200 community health clinics across the country and provide \$200 million in recruitment grants over four years, helping provinces hire 7,000 health care professionals, including nurses and nurse practitioners.

Canada's Nurses rank the NDP 5/5. The NDP is the only federal party that committed funds to hire new health care professionals and build new community clinics. These commitments rank as full marks in contrast to the lack of attention by other parties. More needs to be done to address the looming HHR issue among health care professionals.

1/5 Greens

The Green platform did not release details of an HHR strategy.

Canada's Nurses rank the Greens 1/5. Even though no specific HHR strategy was identified in the platform, the Greens commitment to sit down with provinces to negotiate a new health accord means that HHR will be positively impacted through that process. More federal assistance is needed.

0/5 Conservatives

The Conservative platform did not make mention of a national health human resources plan, and reductions in health care transfer rates to provinces risk reductions in the number of health care professionals.

Canada's Nurses rank the Conservatives 0/5. With no specific HHR strategy and unwillingness to work with the provinces on a health care, the Conservatives have again received the worst possible ranking.