



# Liberal



*Islanders First...*  
**For Health Care**

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## *Putting the Health of Islanders First*

*Liberals believe the provision of timely health services that meet the needs of Islanders is one of government's most important responsibilities. Over the last decade, however, the Conservatives have failed to deliver the kind of health services to which Islanders should be entitled.*

*A Liberal Government would commit to reducing wait times and establishing targets to guide major improvements to our health care system. All Islanders deserve timely access to a family doctor to support their primary health care needs. Family doctors also play a key role in directing Islanders to appropriate specialty services.*

*Islanders also need an ambulance service that is more concerned about people than profit. At the same time, Islanders living in rural communities should enjoy the same access to health services as those living elsewhere in the province. Rather than closing our community hospitals, Liberals believe in re-investing in rural health care. Strategic investments in our health care workers and hospitals are only part of the solution. We also need to expand the access that Islanders have to required medications. Finally, our efforts to do a better job at treating illnesses must be complemented by more health promotion and testing initiatives.*

***Liberals are committed to putting the health of Islanders first with the following initiatives:***

- ***Enhanced Access to Health Professionals and A Family Doctor for Every Islander***
- ***Ambulance Services: Affordable and Accessible for All***
- ***Getting Islanders the Medications They Require***
- ***Health Promotion: An Investment with Healthy Returns***





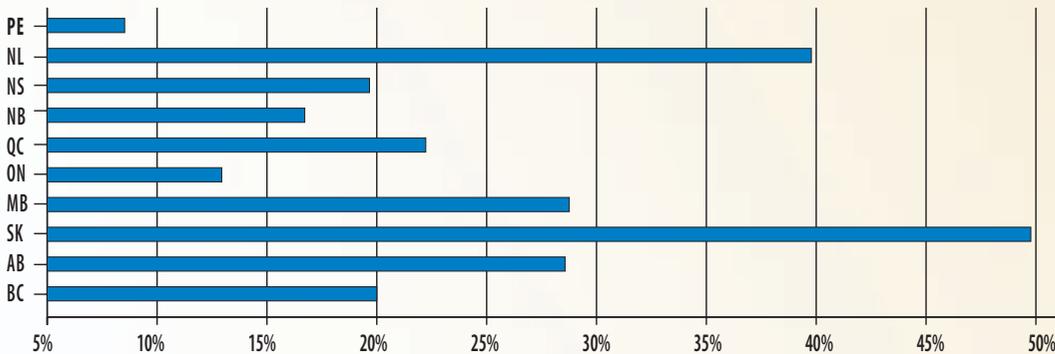
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## Enhanced Access to Health Professionals and A Family Doctor for Every Islander

Liberals believe that timely access to a family doctor is perhaps the most important part of re-building the our system of primary health care in this province. However, thousand of Islanders don't have a family doctor to guide them through the health care system. A study released by the Canadian Institute of Health Information in 2005 found that Islanders had the poorest access to family doctors in the country.

% of Family Doctors/GP Accepting New Patients



Source: Canadian Institute of Health Information (August 2005)

Part of the way you develop solutions to the doctor shortage is by admitting the scope of the problem. At one point the Conservatives tried to claim that 97% of Islanders had access to a family doctor. A Liberal Government will make it a top priority to ensure that every Islander has timely access to a family doctor. We will invest in the kind of recruitment and retention activities that have allowed other Atlantic provinces to gain doctors while P.E.I has lagged behind.

In addition, Liberals are committed to improving our supply of other health professionals. More nurses, nurse practitioners, and homecare workers are required to support our health care system. At the same time, there are a host of other health professionals serving as technicians and technologists who are critical to the effective functioning of health care on the Island.

### **A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:**

1. Ensuring that **every Islander has timely access to a family doctor** by the implementation of the most comprehensive doctor recruitment strategy ever undertaken on Prince Edward Island;
2. **Increasing the complement of family doctors on P.E.I** so that Islanders have the same access to doctors as the national average.
3. **Doubling the doctor recruitment budget** to \$4.1 million over a 2 year period.
4. Establishing a **\$1.5 Million Rural Doctor Recruitment and Retention Program** for getting more doctors to our rural communities;
5. Assigning responsibility to a senior official in the **Premier's Office** to directly oversee expanded recruitment activities and the attainment of targets;
6. **Implementing a Family Medicine Residency Program** as soon as possible.
7. **Developing wait time benchmarks** in consultation with the medical community for access to medical services where PEI does not already meet national standards.
8. Increasing homecare funding to support enhanced access to homecare nursing and medical services.



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## *Ambulance Services: Affordable and Accessible for All*

*The new Liberal team believes that ambulance services are an essential component of the public health care system. Unfortunately, the business of ambulance services has dominated decision-making around the delivery of services. The decision on whether or not to call an ambulance should never be about ability to pay, but rather the urgency of the need. Liberals are committed to expanding ambulance coverage for all Islanders. We are also committed to recognizing that emergency ambulance services should be a funded part of the public health system.*

### ***A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:***

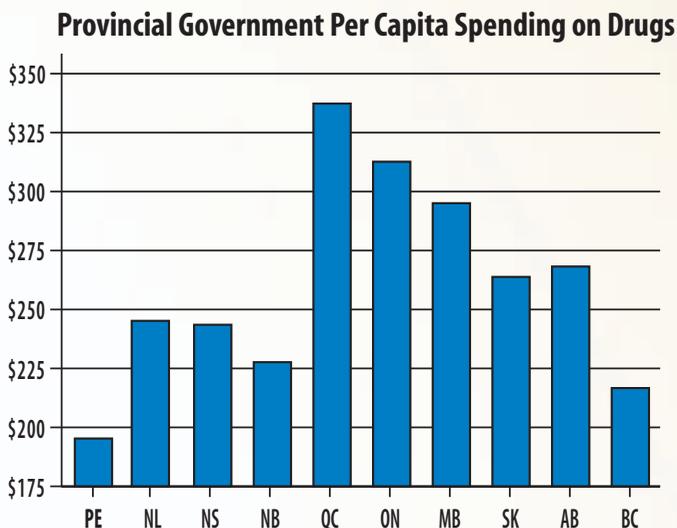
- 1. **Eliminating fees for emergency ambulance** services and cap total ambulance fees paid by individuals.*
- 2. Determining the level of ambulance coverage required for all catchment areas and **increasing coverage** where needed;*
- 3. Working with emergency service providers to determine the feasibility of a **province-wide central dispatch system** staffed by paramedics for all emergency services offering timely and seamless service delivery.*
- 4. Increasing funding for fire departments in order to enhance **First Responder** services.*





## Getting Islanders the Medications They Require

No one questions the fact that new and innovative medications are assuming a greater portion of health care funding. But new medications are also extending individuals lives and dramatically improving the quality of life of those living with chronic conditions. By any measure, Islanders have the poorest access to publicly-funded medications in the country. Being forced to choose between food, electricity, or life saving medication is a bitter pill to swallow.



Source: Canadian Institute of Health Information (2006)

*Liberals believe that access to required medications is a social cost for which governments simply must find the resources.*

### ***A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:***

- 1. Reducing the drug cost assistance program co-pay amounts*** for seniors by 50% over three years;
- 2. Providing Islanders with the same access to publicly-funded drugs*** as other Canadians by increasing the ***provincial government's share of total drug spending*** to the national average from the lowest in the country;
- 3. Dramatically speeding up access to medications*** approved by the Canadian Common Drug review process by legislating timelines under which decisions are made to add approved drugs to the formulary.
- 4. Establishing a palliative care home drug program*** so that Islanders can access drugs in a home environment.
- 5. Establishing a public advisory panel*** with representatives from health charities and the medical community to oversee provincial government decision-making on the placement of approved medications on the provincial formulary;
- 6. Working with the Federal Government and other provincial governments to develop a catastrophic drug program*** to support those Islanders whose health depends upon access to costly medications.
- 7. Covering the cost of Diabetic Strips*** under existing drug programs.

## Health Promotion: An Investment with Healthy Returns

*Liberals believe that health promotion and disease prevention are key ingredients to a broader wellness strategy. It is time for a government that gives more than lip service to promoting health by preventing disease in the first place. Issues surrounding the dramatic rise in childhood diabetes are clear examples of costly chronic conditions that can be prevented through focused health promotion activities. Effective health promotion takes an investment in people and programs that saves lives, improves our quality of life, and ultimately reduces health care costs.*

### **A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:**

1. **Exempt all children's fitness equipment** from the provincial sales tax to make exercising more affordable.
2. Increasing resources aimed at **testing/screening for cancers**, including the establishment of a **Colo-Rectal Screening Program**.
3. Establishing a new \$500,000 **Health Charities Operational Funding Program** that offers assistance to health charities that undertake public education around health promotion/disease prevention;
4. Implementing the **Cancer Control Strategy** by establishing multi-year funding commitments and the allocation of full-time staff support, including a **patient navigator position**.
5. **Increasing health promotion staff** within the Department of Health.
6. Working with the education system to ensure a greater emphasis on **physical fitness** in school curriculum.





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*Authorized by the official agent Liberal Party of PEI*

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