



# NDP Responds

Note: We have yet to release our full platform but here are the answers to date outlining our commitments.

## Public Health Physicians of Canada

### *Transparent, Accountable and Informed Decision Making*

*Question 1.a: Does your party support the role of the chief public health officer of Canada and other government-employed scientists and professionals to speak freely and to express publicly facts and opinions, based on their professional expertise, on health matters of national importance (without covert or overt restriction or prior ministerial approval) as specified in the Public Health Agency of Canada Act and articulated by other Canadian laws and reports such as the Statistics Act and the Naylor report “Learning from SARS - Renewal of Public Health in Canada”?*

**NDP Response:** New Democrats will respect and encourage the independence of Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer. The severe deterioration of independent scientific policymaking under Stephen Harper’s government has tarnished the reputation of Canada’s world renowned scientific community to the point of unprecedented public protests across the country. A New Democratic government will clearly signal our support of the independence of the Chief Public Health Officer and other scientists in our public health system.

Tom Mulcair and a New Democratic government are also committed to restoring the voice of scientists in Canada by:

- creating a Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister headed by a Chief Science Advisor to ensure that our government always has access to the best possible scientific advice from experts in all fields;
- putting an end to the Conservatives’ policy of muzzling scientists and ensuring that Canada’s leading experts are freely available to speak to the media and to publish their findings. We will implement the NDP’s comprehensive plan to promote the voice of scientists in Ottawa as laid out in our motion (M-453) that would promote scientific integrity; and
- working to re-establish scientific capacity in government departments
- establishing the Office of the Parliamentary Science Officer as per Bill C-558 to ensure that parliamentarians have the best possible access to science-based analysis.

*Question 1.b: To enable expert advice on matters of health and social policy that is based on valid data, does your party support the re-establishment of the mandatory long-form census or have another strategy to ensure that sample bias does not limit the validity of comprehensive data sets that could otherwise help us to understand better the realities of Canadian demographics and other factors that are associated with health outcomes?*

**NDP Response:** The NDP would re-establish the long-form census and, to this effect, tabled Bill C-346 to reinstate Statistics Canada's long-form census and increase the independence of the Chief Statistician.

*Health of Aboriginal Peoples, Refugees and Other Disadvantaged Groups*

*Question 2a: Does your party support the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with respect to the health of Aboriginal Canadians; if so, could you state specifically how you would proceed to implement them?*

**NDP Response:** The New Democratic Party has publicly stated its intention to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. We will support the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation with funding of \$8 million and will work with the provinces.

We are also committed to invest in the health outcomes of urban Indigenous Canadians in the amount of health \$120 million. This is in addition to new funding for Seniors care, increasing accessibility, clinics and doctors and nurses, a universal drug plan, mental health and suicide prevention and a diabetes strategy (that disproportionately affects Indigenous citizens) as well as Nutrition North. We will work with Indigenous peoples on a plan to improve their health and make sure they get support through these programs.

An NDP government will work to improve the living conditions on reserves and address other determinants of health. This includes:

- Increasing access to capital for aboriginal business development so that First Nations, Inuit and Métis people can fully participate in the Canadian economy;
- Improving physical infrastructure such as housing, drinking water facilities, roads and other essential services;
- Removing the punitive 2 per cent funding cap on Indian and Northern Affairs Canada transfers to aboriginal communities;
- Addressing the education deficit with a \$1 billion per year investment over the next four years, inspired by Shannen's Dream.

*Question 2b: Does your party support the re-instatement of the pre-2012 interim federal health program for refugees during their highest risk period when they first arrive in Canada, which would enable them to receive prevention and treatment services in a more optimal way, thus better meeting their needs as well as needs of all Canadians?*

**NDP Response:** Many Canadians were astounded and disgusted at Stephen Harper's cuts to health supports for refugees – those fleeing for their lives and at their most vulnerable. That the Harper Conservatives would not totally reverse this move, even after being exposed and disciplined by the courts – of both justice and public opinion – is stunning. A New Democrat government will move as quickly as possible to fully restore refugee health services.

*Early Childhood Development*

*Question 3: What specific strategies and actions does your party support with respect to improving early childhood development in Canada and what goals and objectives would you set out to achieve in the next four years?*

**NDP Response:** In addition to maintaining current federal child benefits, we will work with provinces, territories and Indigenous communities to deliver a Canada-wide early childhood education and childcare program where parents pay no more than \$15 a day. We will also significantly reduce the number of Canadians who have to choose between quality child care for their children's future and putting healthy food on their children's' table. The costs of childcare are breaking household budgets.

### *National Immunization Strategy*

*Question 4.a: Would your party commit to stronger federal leadership in the next four years, work more closely with the provinces and territories, and use federal resources to implement all of the elements of a national immunization strategy, including assisting less-resourced provinces and territories to achieve greater equity of programs across the country?*

**NDP Response:** A New Democratic government will base its health policy decisions on scientific evidence and this fundamental commitment applies to child vaccinations above all. Canada is not in good shape on this issue, ranking 28th of 29 industrial countries and well below the 95 percent needed for the benchmark herd immunity threshold. Ironically, we have world-class vaccine researchers working in a health delivery environment unable to ensure that the products of their science reach and protect their fellow Canadians.

Delivery of health services in Canada – including child immunization – falls under the jurisdiction of provinces and territories. And, as with many other health services, there is considerable variation in that delivery depending on where you live.

To rectify this patchwork effect, leadership from the federal government is needed and, under a New Democratic government, it will be provided. An NDP government will bring together our provincial and territorial counterparts, along with health care providers, to collaborate on developing a pan-Canadian strategy to raise our immunization rate to a 95 percent target. This strategy could include elements such as bolstering public education, developing immunization surveillance across jurisdictions and maximizing the effectiveness of health care providers such as pharmacists. When it comes to protecting children from communicable diseases, a national response is required because we are dealing with a problem that affects us all.

*Question 4.b: Would your party commit to playing a federal leadership role to work with the provinces and territories to establish a national Pharmacare program to achieve more consistency, efficiency and availability in the evidence-based use of pharmaceuticals in the prevention and treatment of illness?*

**NDP Response:** Tom Mulcair and the NDP will work in consultation with provinces to work towards a plan to support universal comprehensive public drug coverage for all Canadians, regardless of where they live or where they work. Our goal is that Canadians will have access to the prescription medicines they need at little or no cost.

We will work to achieve this by delivering \$2.6 billion in new federal funding focused on universal public drug coverage, to be phased in over the next four years and reaching \$1.5 billion annually in 2019/2020, an investment that has the potential to generate up to \$3 billion in savings at the provincial level.

*Question 5: How would your party use federal spending power as well as legal and policy levers to work with the provinces and territories and other professional and community-based organizations to strengthen disease prevention and health promotion across Canada? Would your party fund and establish national strategies to address public health threats? If so, please specify which strategies you would launch or advocate for during the next government term?*

**NDP Response:** New Democrats are strong defenders of our cherished public healthcare system, founded by New Democrat Tommy Douglas. We know that our public healthcare system is under attack, between neglect and reckless cuts from the Conservatives and from those who want to privatize it. We will restore the federal leadership role that has been lacking under the Conservatives. The NDP will reverse Stephen Harper's cuts to the Canada Health Transfer to ensure it increases by at least 6% per year for our first mandate. This will put over \$5 billion back into provincial health care in the next 4 years to address the priorities provinces and Canadians have identified. We will work collaboratively with the provinces and territories on developing a new set of health care agreements. We also believe the federal government has an important role to play in upholding the *Canada Health Act* and in working with the provinces and territories to adapt Medicare to the challenges of the 21st century.