



# Health care in NL needs to see a pharmacist



Dear Premier Ball,

As the residents of this province get set to elect a new government, the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL), is eager to hear your party's views on how pharmacists may be more effectively utilized within the healthcare system.

Specifically, we would like for the Liberal party to 'grade' itself on how it fulfilled the commitments made going into the 2016 general election. In the following pages, we have provided the 2016 questions posed to your party and your responses. We are now asking you to tell us how you think you did, as well as outline your current position on these matters of importance. For your convenience, we have also attached your 2016 correspondence in full.

We are asking these important questions of all parties. We look forward to hearing back from you and to sharing responses with our members as well as the public we serve.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jaw".

Jennifer Collingwood  
Executive Director  
Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL)

## 2016 Question — Universal Funding for Influenza Vaccination Program

Will your government commit to a universal seasonal flu vaccine program so that residents of NL can access the flu vaccine free of charge through pharmacies, physicians' offices, and public health clinics?

### **2016 Liberal Party Response:**

We believe the double standard as it exists now in flu vaccination coverage lacks logic. The current policy diverts people from accessing their pharmacist for this service, which is counterintuitive to optimizing scopes for savings and improved access. We will revise this policy in consultation with stakeholders like PANL to maximize vaccination rates in the most cost-effective way.

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**2019 PANL:**

PANL is deeply disappointed that the Ball Government fully failed to fulfill their public commitment to “revise this policy in consultation with PANL to maximize vaccination rates in the most cost-effective way.” Due to our lack of a truly universal program (which exists in the majority of other provinces) where all residents can receive the vaccination by any health care provider at no cost, our vaccination rates remain among the lowest in the country. Expanding the vaccination program to include pharmacist-delivered flu shots would significantly reduce the barrier to access, especially in rural areas where community-based clinics are simply not feasible. The result would be an increase in the number of residents being immunized, thereby alleviating the strain on emergency rooms and physician offices and freeing up these resources for more complex care patients. If re-elected, will your government finally live up to the commitment made in 2016 to revise the current vaccination policy?

**2019 Liberal Party Response**

**2016 Question — Universal Funding for Minor Ailments**

Will government fund prescribing for minor ailments universally, regardless of whether the assessment occurs in a pharmacy, doctors office, or an emergency room?

**2016 Liberal Party Response:**

We will conduct a thorough review of all legislation and regulations covering healthcare professionals to identify ways to allow healthcare professionals to work to their full scope of practice. Changes resulting from this review will streamline primary care, improve patient care, and build a more efficient system. Part of that process will be ensuring that we manage these changes in scope in an equitable way.

**2019 PANL:**

Did your government complete the review referenced above? Enabling pharmacists to work to their full scope of practice would certainly streamline primary care, improve patient care and build a more efficient system as noted in your response. Will your party firmly commit to providing universal funding for prescribing for minor ailments if re-elected?

**2019 Liberal Party Response**

**2016 Question — Universal Funding for Smoking Cessation**

Will your party commit to funding a universal smoking cessation program to provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with improved access, medication expertise and the ongoing counseling needed to successfully quit smoking?

**2016 Liberal Party Response:**

A new Liberal government will work to lower the rates of chronic disease through a health promotion and healthy living strategy. This will include investment in health promotion, healthy living programs, and early intervention, which will reduce acute healthcare costs in the longer term and achieve a healthy population in our province.

We will implement an anti-smoking program, including support for organizations that offer smoking cessation programs. We've allocated \$1 million to focus on anti-smoking campaigns for youth in our province.

**2019 PANL:**

PANL acknowledges that much work has been done in the area of smoking cessation. However, the costs of most smoking cessation aids are still cost prohibitive for many residents trying to quit. Further, as the most accessible healthcare provider, pharmacists are uniquely positioned to assist patients with smoking cessation and similarly to minor ailments, universal funding should be in place so that pharmacist-prescribed smoking cessation programs are available to all residents, not only to NLPDP clients. Will your party commit to funding a universal smoking cessation program to provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with improved access, medication expertise and the ongoing counseling needed to successfully quit smoking?

**2019 Liberal Party Response:**

**2016 Question — Pharmacist Involvement in Primary Healthcare Teams**

Will your party commit to increasing involvement of pharmacists in primary healthcare teams to enhance accessible care for patients in our province?

**2016 Liberal response:**

A new Liberal government will operationalize a more holistic concept of health and healthcare by establishing regional primary healthcare teams. A new Liberal government will invest an additional \$15.5 million for primary healthcare on top of the existing budgetary envelope. We believe that an efficient and innovative primary healthcare approach can maximize healthcare dollars, help address recruitment and retention in more rural and remote regions and improve health outcomes, resulting in a healthier population. We see pharmacists as key players on these teams and look forward to working with pharmacists to develop a more integrated and interdisciplinary community-based approach to health promotion and chronic disease management.

A new Liberal government will also implement a Diabetes Prevention and Management Program with regional health authorities and their primary health teams. This process will start with the implementation of a province-wide Diabetes Database to enable tracking of up-to-date health statistics and evidence-based decision making.

**2019 PANL:**

PANL acknowledges that work has been done in the establishment of primary healthcare teams. Did your government provide funding to support the placement of pharmacists in these teams? If not, will your party commit to doing so if re-elected?

**2019 Liberal party response**

## 2016 Question — Pharmacy Network Costs

Should your government form the next government, will you increase the amount of funding provided to individual pharmacies to address costs of setup, transition to the network and technical requirements?

### **2016 Liberal Party Response:**

The benefits of technology like the Pharmacy Network are dependent upon stakeholder buy-in and completeness in information. Implementing new technologies can prove costly, but a well-functioning Pharmacy Network should result in improved medication management, which, in turn, will result in improved health outcomes and savings in the longer term.

Liberals will work with pharmacists to ascertain the costs associated with participating in the Network so as to avoid any negative impact on the viability of pharmacies.

### **2019 PANL:**

While government did assist pharmacies with some of the upfront costs associated with setting up the Pharmacy Network, government did not make any funding available to help offset ongoing maintenance costs.

Government has recently endorsed Infoway Canada's e-prescribing platform, PrescribeIT, for use in pharmacies in this province. While e-prescribing will be used by two main stakeholders – physicians and pharmacies – the associated transactional costs will be borne in full by pharmacists. Because your government did not provide funding for the ongoing Pharmacy Network costs, if re-elected, will your government work with Infoway to establish a funding model that will not result in e-prescribing costs being fully downloaded on community pharmacies?

### **2019 Liberal Party Response**

## 2016 Question — Public Service Pharmacists Salary Levels

Do you support a compensation structure for public service pharmacists that is on par with the other three Atlantic provinces, as opposed to the measure of market adjustment? Will your government work with public service pharmacists and their representatives to address this issue?

### **2016 Liberal Party Response:**

We are committed to open collaboration and look forward to meeting with public service pharmacists to discuss compensation structures across jurisdictions and the benefits of each.

### **2019 PANL:**

While government did engage in discussions, in December 2019 the two-year Market Adjustment term will end. Will you continue to engage with stakeholders, including PANL, to develop a long-term solution, including the inclusion of market adjustments as pensionable salary?

### **2019 Liberal Party Response**

## 2016 Question — Research Funding

Will your government fund research that will determine whether pharmacist-delivered services improve health outcomes at a reasonable cost?

### **2016 Liberal Party Response:**

We believe wholeheartedly in the motto, “If you can’t measure progress, you can’t manage it.”

We are excited about the prospect of a Canada Research Chair in Healthcare Sustainability and Policy Evaluation. We regard the School of Pharmacy and MUN as a whole, as key players in ensuring good governance.

### **2019 PANL:**

We acknowledge government’s commitment to funding fiscally responsible programming - we do as well because as the province’s pharmacy advocacy body, PANL is only interested in delivering services to residents that provide them with the greatest benefits. If re-elected, will your government support these shared goals by funding research and program evaluations of innovative pharmacist-delivered services?

### **2019 Liberal party response**

## 2016 Question — Mental Health and Addictions

Will your government ensure involvement of PANL in discussions and approaches to address any mental health and addictions services and programming gaps?

### **2016 Liberal Party Response:**

Absolutely. We are committed to a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy which will be developed in consultation with stakeholders like PANL. We want and need the voice of pharmacists at the table to ensure our approach is comprehensive and effective.

### **2019 PANL:**

We acknowledge the involvement of PANL and pharmacists in discussions and approaches to mental health and addictions services and look forward to continued engagement. With the introduction of hub and spoke delivery models throughout the province, if re-elected, will your government commit to ensuring that clinical services in these sites are delivered by on-site pharmacists?

### **2019 Liberal party response**

## 2016 Question Posed — PANL Contract

Will your government maintain the PANL/GNL negotiation committee for the new contract to take place in 2016?

### **2016 Liberal response:**

As always, we are committed to open collaboration. We look forward to acquainting ourselves with both teams and moving forward with negotiations. Ensuring the committees are well-appointed is in the best interests of all parties.

### **2019 PANL:**

PANL thanks the Ball government for an open, transparent and respectful negotiation process that resulted in a new PANL/NLPDP contract effective December 21, 2018. During negotiations, both parties agreed that there is merit in separating the NLPDP drug delivery aspect of this contract from the clinical services aspect. If re-elected, will your government work with PANL to do this and negotiate a separate financial agreement on the provision of clinical services?

### **2019 Liberal Party Response**

## 2016 Question — NLPDP Awareness

Will your government put mechanisms in place to help ensure all those who are eligible are aware of the NLPDP program and avail of it?

### **2016 Liberal Party Response:**

We need to do a lot more to engage people in becoming informed and active partners in caring for their own health. We need to increase awareness about healthcare and the resources out there for people. That includes education eligible beneficiaries about the various plans under the NL Prescription Drug Program.

### **2019 PANL:**

While we are aware of that number of NLPDP prescriptions has increased, there is always work to be done to ensure that the public is fully aware of the various government-funded programs and services available to them. If re-elected, will your government continue its public engagement and education work with regard to NLPDP eligibility?

### **2019 Liberal Party Response**

## 2016 Question — National Pharmacare:

Will your government encourage, initiative and participate in dialogue with the Federal Government, in consultation with PANL, on the development of a national pharmacare program?

### **2016 Liberal Party Response:**

We look forward to a productive and progressive relationship with the federal government, something our province has been missing for a decade. We recognize the role that medication adherence has on improving

health outcomes and reducing or avoiding hospital admissions and readmissions. We are ever committed to evidence-based decision making, and will collaborate with the federal government on matters of importance, such as a national pharmacare program.

### **2019 PANL:**

As national pharmacare gets closer to becoming a reality, it is important now more than ever for our provincial government to remain strong in its position on national pharmacare. If re-elected, will your government continue to consult with PANL and other stakeholders as national pharmacare evolves and advocate for a model that leverages the experience and knowledge of pharmacists to provide better care to patients, and builds on existing public and private prescription drug programs to ensure all Canadians have access to the medications they need for optimal health?

### **2019 Liberal Party Response**

As mentioned above, PANL is also asking the three other political parties to outline their position on these important issues. Additional questions that were not asked of you in 2016 are below for your response:

## **2019 Question: Recognition of the Financial Pressures Facing Community Pharmacies**

Over the past few years, pharmacy owners have been dealt a number of significant financial blows. In addition to increased regulation and operating costs, the April 2018 generic price reduction meant as much as a 20 percent decrease in revenue for many pharmacy owners, resulting in layoffs and reduction in pharmacy hours, thereby significantly impacting optimal patient access and care.

Further, with insurers implementing pay for performance programs and the introduction of e-prescribing, a service for which pharmacies will solely bear the cost, the financial pressures are only mounting.

These industry specific challenges are also compounded by the many inflationary pressures facing all other provincial businesses such as increase in minimum wage, rising power costs and adherence to Occupational Health and Safety standards.

Pharmacies, especially independent ones in rural communities, can be integral to the improved health and safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Yet, the province is at risk of losing these vital partners without substantial change.

**Question:** Will your party work with PANL and other stakeholders to ensure the compensation provided to pharmacies adequately reflects the true costs of delivering pharmacy services to patients?

## **2019 Question: Reimbursement for Pharmacist-Physician Consultations**

Statements made by the Honourable John Haggie, Minister of Health and Community Services, such as, *"Pharmacists are highly trained, capable professionals who provide frontline services every day to the general public,"* (March 12 2018) and, *"Pharmacists are valued professionals who not only play an integral role in our healthcare system, but also serve as an important source of knowledge when it comes to healing and education,"* (January 8, 2019), demonstrate that the current Provincial Government values the role of pharmacists in delivering front-line services and their importance to sustainable and effective health care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. However, pharmacists continue to provide services for which other providers are reimbursed. For example, the *Family Practice Renewal Program* compensates physicians for the time they spend consulting with pharmacists and other health care providers. There is a serious inequity here as pharmacists spend a significant amount of their time on a daily basis consulting with physicians on

patients' prescribed medications — there is no compensation to pharmacists, and it takes valuable time out of their work day.

**Question:** Does your party support equity among health care providers? Will your party recognize the importance of pharmacists to the health care system by adequately compensating them for health care services similar to other providers, such as compensation for consultation with physicians?

## PRIORITIZATION

How does your party prioritize the issues outlined above with '1' being least-important to '10' being most important?

Your party's ranking	
Universal funding for flu vaccination program	
Universal funding for pharmacist prescribing, i.e. minor ailments such as cold sores, yeast infections, smoking cessation	
Reimbursement equity for pharmacist-delivered services, i.e. pharmacist consultation with physicians	
Expanded pharmacist role in primary care teams	
Public service pharmacist salaries on par with other jurisdictions	
Evaluation of pharmacist-delivered services	
Expanded pharmacist involvement in mental health and addictions	
Expanded consultation on national issues	
Recognition of and assistance with financial pressures facing the operation of community pharmacies	