

Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Campaign

Dear Ms. Susin

Thank you for reaching out to the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative campaign. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your questionnaire for members of NPANS.

1) Role Expansion and Promotion– NPs are recognized as being critical to improving public access to quality healthcare, particularly in underserved areas. For example, the majority of health care professionals at Virtual Care Nova Scotia are NPs. With their advanced training and ability to deliver comprehensive care, their role can continue to expand to address gaps in the healthcare system. However, as a relatively new contributor to the health care system, the NP role is often misunderstood or dismissed.

a) Will your party commit to policies supporting expanding the NP role across healthcare settings in Nova Scotia?

The PC party fully supports the expansion of the nurse practitioner role across healthcare settings in Nova Scotia as part of our ongoing commitment to improving access to quality care. Through our Action for Health strategy, we have prioritized initiatives that recognize the critical contributions of NPs, especially in underserved communities where they play a significant role in addressing gaps in the healthcare system.

For instance, the inclusion of NPs in Virtual Care Nova Scotia highlights their importance in delivering comprehensive care and improving patient access. This commitment extends to our collaborative family practice clinics, which integrate NPs as part of a health home model. These clinics have seen significant growth as NPs have worked well in the team-based care structure, alongside doctors, pharmacists, dietitians, social workers, and more. Our government has invested \$17 million in expanding primary healthcare, supporting new and existing clinics to ensure that comprehensive care reaches more Nova Scotians.

Additionally, we have reinforced emergency department support through Flow Lead and Offload Assessment Teams, and expanded staffing with waiting room care providers and NPs to improve patient flow and reduce wait times.

We have also prioritized long-term care by increasing funding to provide 4.1 hours of care per resident—one of the highest levels in Canada—and have bolstered the workforce by adding more NPs in these facilities. This is part of a broader strategy focused on recruiting and

retaining family physicians and nurse practitioners to sustain high-quality care throughout the province.

A re-elected Progressive Conservative government will continue to champion policies that expand the role of NPs and ensure they are recognized and fully integrated into our healthcare system.

b) Will your party commit to providing targeted funding to NPANS to support public awareness and promotional campaigns that educate about the important role and benefits of NPs?

NPs play an essential role in our healthcare system, and we will continue to explore ways to support and recognize their great work. While we are always open to discussions on how best to improve public awareness and promote the contributions of healthcare professionals, any potential funding decisions would need to be carefully considered in the context of our broader healthcare priorities and fiscal planning.

2. Enhanced Autonomy for Nurse Practitioners – NPs are autonomous practitioners; however, many experience unnecessary red tape and micromanagement by healthcare administrators, preventing them from maximizing their impact on the healthcare system.

How will your party address this issue to ensure NPs can practice fully and Autonomously?

Over the past three years, we have made significant strides in reducing administrative burdens throughout the healthcare system. We believe that healthcare professionals should be focused on delivering care and improving patient outcomes, not on excessive paperwork.

To support this, we will continue to leverage the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness, which plays a key role in collaborating with healthcare teams to identify and remove unnecessary administrative barriers. Earlier this year, our government was recognized with the Golden Scissors Award from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for our efforts in cutting red tape in healthcare. While this is a milestone, we understand there is more work to be done. A re-elected PC government will build on this momentum, ensuring NPs have the autonomy they need to maximize their impact on Nova Scotia's healthcare system.

3. Alternative Funding Models—On October 8, 2023, the Minister of Health in Alberta announced a new funding model allowing NPs to direct bill and open their own clinics.

NPANS has developed and attached a document outlining the details of this Model and highlighting its positive impacts on the Nova Scotia health system.

Will your party consider implementing alternative funding frameworks like those in Alberta to increase access to care for NPs in Nova Scotia?

To determine whether this approach is suitable for Nova Scotia, we would first conduct an internal review with the Department of Health and Wellness. This review would evaluate the feasibility, potential benefits, and challenges associated with implementing such a funding model.

Our priority is to ensure that any adjustments to funding frameworks align with our goal of expanding access to quality healthcare and supporting healthcare professionals, including NPs. By collaborating with stakeholders like the NPANS, we will work to identify effective solutions that address challenges in the system.

4. Retention of Nurse Practitioners in Primary Care – There is a growing trend of NPs leaving primary care. NPANS estimates that 20% of NPs working in primary care have left for other positions in the last year and a half. These positions are not always another role within the health authority.

– How does your party plan to address the trend of NPs attrition from primary care roles, ensuring we maintain a robust workforce to serve our communities?

To address the growing trend of nurse practitioners (NPs) leaving primary care roles, our government has implemented recruitment and retention strategies aimed at building a supportive work environment for healthcare professionals, including NPs.

Key initiatives include significant investments in retention bonuses and incentives for 55,000 healthcare professionals. These measures are designed to recognize and reward the dedication of NPs and other frontline workers, ensuring they feel valued and motivated to continue serving in primary care settings.

Additionally, we have supported initiatives to expand training, orientation, and professional development, enabling us to add new NPs to the system. For example, our investments in infrastructure, such as the establishment of new medical school seats at Cape Breton University and our partnerships with Dalhousie University to expand medical education, help build a sustainable pipeline of skilled healthcare workers, including those who work collaboratively with NPs. In the last budget, we pledged \$637,000 to continue expanded nurse training programs as part of a four-year commitment to add 80 seats for nursing students at Dalhousie University, Cape Breton University, and St. Francis Xavier University.

Understanding that work-life balance is essential, we have also taken steps to support healthcare workers' personal needs. For instance, the October 2023 partnership with a child-care center in Sydney provides flexible child-care options for healthcare professionals. This initiative is particularly relevant for NPs, who often balance demanding work hours with family responsibilities.

Moreover, our government has streamlined processes to make it easier for internationally educated healthcare professionals to join the workforce. By supporting colleges and regulatory bodies to license these professionals more efficiently, we strengthen the healthcare system and create a more robust and collaborative work environment, indirectly supporting NPs in their vital roles.

We remain committed to continuously assessing and refining our recruitment and retention strategies to ensure NPs feel supported, valued, and motivated to continue their critical work in primary care.

Kind regards,

NSPC Campaign