

## Ideas. Action. Purpose.

# Insuring Albertans' Health, Ensuring Alberta's Future

Kevin Taft and the Alberta Liberals have spoken out strongly in favour of a well-managed public health care system. Is that what we've got now? In a word, no.

Arbitrary cuts, ad-hoc funding, and decisions based on ideology rather than fact have undermined public health care in Alberta — as well as public confidence that the system can deliver when we need it.

The truth? Our system is stressed but not broken, and public health care is still the most cost-effective and compassionate way to meet the health care needs of Albertans.

That said, public health care does cost a lot of money. At more than \$10 billion per year, it's the government's top expenditure. But health care costs are not out of control — in fact, costs are dropping as a percentage of Alberta's GDP (total value of goods and services produced annually). Of course, as our population grows and ages, there will continue to be upward pressure on health care costs and that's why we need to spend smarter now.

The Alberta Liberal plan for health care focuses on innovation within the public health care system, to provide more effective, timely care while restraining costs.

### Improve Access

- Emergency rooms have never been so crowded. The Alberta Liberals would take some of the pressure off overburdened hospitals by opening more **community health centres** for non-life threatening health matters. Albertans who don't have a family doctor would be able to see a physician or other health care professional when it's convenient for them — during the day, in the evening or on the weekend.

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- We would also expand **home care services** and create more **long-term care** spaces, to free up acute care beds and provide people who need ongoing medical attention with more appropriate care.
- There is an urgent need to attract more doctors and other health care professionals to Alberta, especially to communities outside the major urban centres. The Alberta Liberals would develop comprehensive **incentives to attract and retain rural physicians** and expand residencies and training for non-Canadian doctors willing to relocate here. We would also expand the number of post-secondary spaces in health care fields and increase enrolment by promoting this career choice to students.

## Shorten Wait Times

- **Specialized surgical centres** are a smart way to reduce wait times. It's been proven — the Alberta Bone and Joint Institute Hip and Knee Replacement Project successfully shortened surgical wait times by 90 per cent and consultation wait times by 80 per cent. The improved efficiencies were a result of focusing on very specific procedures and having multi-disciplinary teams on-site to treat patients. The Alberta Liberals would apply this concept to other areas with long wait times to achieve similar results.

## Reduce the Need

- It goes without saying the best way to reduce the stress on the public health care system is to help people become healthier. The Alberta Liberals believe more emphasis needs to be placed on education to **improve wellness** in communities and at home, and to reduce workplace injuries.

Health care costs don't have to be a runaway train. It is possible to protect and preserve public health care in Alberta by tackling the issues with a fresh perspective and the will to succeed.

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