



Seniors – Your Votes Count!

May 23, 2018

Care Watch asked all parties competing for our votes in the Ontario Election on June 7th to specify what they are prepared to do to ensure that seniors can age safely in their own homes and communities. The parties and their leaders were also advised that Care Watch would publish their responses with our own commentary.

As of May 20, 2018, Care Watch had not received a response from ONTARIO’S PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (PCs) with respect to their position on home care and community support services. Letters were sent to the Interim Leader, all leadership candidates and the chosen leader to solicit such information. As a proxy, and to facilitate understanding and voter choice, Care Watch has assembled statements made by the new PC leader (Doug Ford), drawing from the PC Party of Ontario website and news stories via the mass media.

Status of PC Platform:

Since the recent PC leadership change, the Party has not issued a comprehensive or detailed “Party Election Platform”. However, the general understanding is that the platform developed under the former leader (Patrick Brown) is not currently in use. Instead, various platform or policy elements are being released, piece-by-piece.

Of the platform pieces or commitments that have been released thus far, some have been costed by the PCs and those costs made publicly available. However, without a comprehensive statement regarding their positions or commitments, it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the “big picture” of what the PCs intend to do should they be elected, and consequently, to assess the reasonableness or feasibility of their underlying programming and spending plans.

Likewise, since the PCs have issued no clear statement regarding home care and community support services, it is challenging, if not impossible, to identify and understand the range of programmes or services that the PCs intend provide for seniors should they be elected, or to assess the reasonableness of any proposed spending on such programmes or services.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF ONTARIO Material obtained from PC website and media sources	CW Commentary
<u>Policy on overall government spending made by PC Leader</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Watch believes that all governments must strive to be efficient, yet is concerned in this case that the presumed “inefficiencies” have not been

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<p><u>Doug Ford:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ford intends to decrease overall provincial government spending by 4% or \$6 billion by eliminating “inefficiencies” and without any lay-offs in the public sector.¹ 	<p>identified; nor has a concrete plan been proposed for efficiency-related savings in spending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No rationale for the proposed reduction of \$6 billion specifically has been provided. Also not revealed are the intended mechanisms to achieve such reductions, where such reductions will be made or the analysis of likely consequences of such cuts. In CW’s experience, the PC’s proposed \$6 billion reduction in overall government spending translate into significant cuts to programmes and services, and lay-offs in the public sector, which will likely erode already inadequate services for seniors. The suggestion that such cuts would be achieved “without any lay-offs in the public sector” is neither believable nor credible. CW is aware of the consequences of the last wholesale cost cutting sponsored by a PC government. The Walkerton Tragedy in May 2000 is a case in point. Slashing the Ministry of Environment’s budget and discontinuing provincial laboratory water testing for municipalities, contributed to seven deaths and sever illness for more than 2,300 other residents when e-coli contaminated the Town’s inadequately monitored water supply.²
<p><u>General statement about seniors in Ontario:</u></p> <p>Ford has stated: <i>“Our seniors built this province. They took care of us. And it is time we repaid them for all they sacrifice, by doing more to take care of them... If you are a senior or family</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Watch appreciates the sentiment expressed about the vital contribution made by seniors and the importance of taking care of them. However, the pronouncement that “Change is coming and help is on the way” is a sweeping statement devoid of content and, thus, is not a

¹ Source: <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2018/03/27/driving-ontario-over-the-cliff-doug-fords-fiscal-plan.html>).

² See Toronto Star, *Lessons from a tragedy*, May 19, 2018).

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<p><i>member worried about the future, we will be there for you. Change is coming and help is on the way”.³</i></p>	<p>credible commitment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW would like to know <i>specifically</i> what “change” is planned and how such change is intended to help seniors, as well as how this “promise” will be kept were the PCs to be elected.
<p>Home Care: To date, Ford and the PCs have not formally addressed the issues of home care for seniors during the election campaign, although some local candidates have expressed “support” for provision of (unspecified) home care services.</p> <p>Thus far, there have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No funding announcements made re: home care; • No public statements regarding community support services for seniors; and • Silence regarding the availability of and working conditions for PSWs or others home and community sector workers. <p>Ford has not publicly commented on who ought to provide delivery of home care, for example, public agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and private sector companies, nor what would be the best mix of service providers.</p> <p>Moreover, the issue of equitable access to home care and community support services across the province has not been raised by Ford and the PCs.</p>	<p>CW considers the lack of attention to home care and community support services a gaping hole in the PC campaign.</p> <p>Also, it is not evident that the PCs are aware of the pressing need to build the labour pool and improve the working conditions and remuneration of PSWs, a critical sector resource who have long been undervalued.</p> <p>CW would like to know that, if the PCs were to be elected,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What range of services will seniors be able to access? • Would home care and community support services be increasingly provided through for-profit agencies, likely resulting in more user fees for seniors, or not-for profit agencies which will reinvest any available “efficiencies” in services? • What measures, if any, would be taken to ensure more equitable access to home care and community support services across the province?

³ Source: https://www.ontariopc.ca/doug_ford_will_invest_in_dental_care_for_low_income_seniors

Potential to Improve lives of Seniors	
<p><u>Community & Primary Care</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ford has promised more money for public health units, community health centres, and Aboriginal health access centres; however, no specific amount of money has been identified or announced.⁴ • The PC Party asserts Ford’s “<i>commitment to frontline health care</i>” in the province; however, a plan and details of that commitment have not been given.⁵ • Ford plans to increase the number of doctors in northern Ontario by reducing their provincial taxes to as low as 0%.⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW supports the expansion of public health units, community health centres, and Aboriginal health access centres at the local level, but would like to see specific investment and development targets to bolster the credibility of this “promise”. • CW would also like to understand what creative ideas the PCs have to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of community and primary care services province-wide. • CW acknowledges the general (if vague) commitment made by the PCs to frontline health care in Ontario, but would like to understand what is meant by “frontline health care” and what strategies will be used to improve such services. • CW also appreciates the need to increase the number of doctors working in northern Ontario, but wonder if the PCs are aware of the many existing incentive plans to attract and retain doctors in the north, and have analysed why they are not effective. Existing research (some by the medical associations) suggests that “provincial taxes” paid by such practitioners are not a critical factor in the decision to practice in the north.
<p><u>Long-Term Care:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ford has announced that he would invest in 15,000 new long-term care beds in five years and 30,000 new beds over the next 10 years.⁷ • The PCs have not publicly committed to any standard re: the number of daily care hours for residents of long-term care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed investment in long-term beds (which is in line with proposals made by the other parties in the election) will contribute to reducing the current wait list for such accommodation. • However, 3,000 beds per year is insufficient to meet even the current demand much less the projected demand. Building LTC beds is also an

⁴ Source: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ford-dental-seniors-income-low-1.4660745>

⁵ Source: https://www.ontariopc.ca/doug_ford_will_cut_wait_times_for_the_people

⁶ Source: <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/ontario-election-2018-party-platforms/#health-care>

⁷ Source: https://www.ontariopc.ca/doug_ford_will_cut_wait_times_for_the_people

<p>facilities.</p>	<p>expensive response to the needs of ageing Ontarians, especially without an associated investment in home care and community support services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also of issue is whether the “new” beds will be allocated to private LTC corporations or developed as municipal or other not-for-profit beds. • CW is disappointed that the PCs have not addressed known critical issues and limitations respecting LTC services, including patient and staff safety, including the need to increase the number of daily care hours for those residents requiring a higher level of daily care. CW wonders if the PCs will support the establishment of stronger standards of care for LTC residents.
<p>Dental Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ford has pledged \$98 million per year to implement a dental care program for low-income seniors.⁸ • The dental care program is intended to increase funding for dental care in under-served areas and provide additional mobile dental buses to serve remote communities.⁹ • Ford has stated the plan could help as many as 100,000 seniors each year. Under the proposed plan, the PCs would utilize the same threshold as the Ontario Drug Benefit: a single senior with a \$19,300 or less income or a couple with a combined income of \$32,300 or less would be eligible.¹⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW supports the introduction of dental services for every senior without retiree benefits, and to people on social assistance. • However, CW would like to understand how – in addition to more mobile dental busses to serve remote communities – such services will be delivered, especially in “under-served areas”.
<p>Pharmacare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW supports the introduction of universal pharmacare for Ontarians, funded through a progressive tax system.
<p>Hospital Care Ford and the PCs have promised to end “hallway medicine” (i.e.,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW acknowledges that Ontario’s hospitals are experiencing unprecedented overcrowding and long wait times, and thus supports

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¹⁰ Source: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ford-dental-seniors-income-low-1.4660745>

<p>occasions when overcrowding in hospitals result in patients being treated in hallways),¹¹ and proposes that the solution is to “... <i>listen to health care professionals, including doctors and nurses</i>” and “... <i>We’re then going to cut wait times by opening up new long term beds.</i>”¹²</p> <p>However,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No detailed announcements have been made about investment in hospitals. • No policies have been proposed re: creating a specific number of new hospital beds. 	<p>strategies and investments to end hallway medicine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW believes that annual funding to hospitals should be at or above inflation, and take into consideration population growth and the unique needs of each community. • However, CW argues that some of the best ways to prevent hospital overcrowding include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Investing in strategies that prevent unnecessary hospitalization, such as home care and community support services; ○ Improving access to primary care in local communities; and ○ Providing <i>alternative levels of care</i> (ALCs), such as convalescent, rehabilitation, and respite beds, and sheltered housing. • PC policy seems to perpetuate medicalization of senior care by emphasizing hospitals and doctors over home care and community supports for seniors. CW disagrees with this approach.
<p><u>Mental Health and Addiction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ford has pledged that a PC government would invest \$1.9 billion over the next decade on mental health and addiction supports and housing.¹³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW supports efforts to address mental health and addiction and related housing challenges, although seniors are not mentioned. • CW would like information on what programming, if any, is being considered to address mental health of seniors, including dementia, social isolation, etc., and the needs of their caregivers.
<p><u>End of Life Care</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW supports improved end of life care.

¹¹ Source: <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/ontario-election-2018-party-platforms/#health-care>

¹² See footnotes 5, 6 and 7.

¹³ Source: <https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2018/04/30/ford-promises-19b-over-10-years-for-mental-health-addiciton.html>