



Yvette Coffey, President
Registered Nurses' Union of Newfoundland
And Labrador
St. John's, NL

Dear Yvette,

Thank you for your letter dated September 10, in which you asked about the Liberal Party's commitments to nurses and healthcare. I know your members are anxious to hear about our government's plan for public health care and I am pleased to share that vision with you.

Health care represents the single biggest investment in our province at nearly \$4.5 billion in Budget 2025. \$35 million of that is to hire additional health care providers for Family Care teams and create new teams to connect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with primary health care.

Our Liberal Government is transforming health care in Newfoundland and Labrador to modernize the system. Guided by the recommendations of Health Accord NL, we are also increasing the focus on the social determinants of health to improve the well-being of people across our province and prevent serious health issues.

One of the immediate recommendations our government acted on was bringing the four separate health authorities together into one, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, to provide more efficient and equitable care.

Our efforts are paying off, but we know there is more work to do.

We are making meaningful progress with our recruitment and retention strategies, which include one of the most attractive incentive packages in the country and a health human resource plan.

We've reduced vacancies across health care disciplines and added seats in programs including medical school, nursing, paramedicine, and licensed practical nursing. More than 90 per cent of last year's nursing class have been successfully recruited, with a 40 per cent reduction in the use of agency nurses from its highest point. Registered nurse vacancies reduced from 418 to 280 from October 2024 to April 2025. Nurse practitioner vacancies reduced from 82 to 65 from October 2024 to April 2025. We've hired 1,300 nurses and 140 physicians since April 2023.

We are reducing our reliance on agency nurses who have been filling the gaps to keep delivering much-needed health care - particularly in more rural and remote parts of the province. In communities with difficult-to-fill positions, agency nurses are valued by residents. People understand that no nurses means no care. They relieve pressure on staff and ensure that safe care can be delivered for patients and residents.



An AG Report on NLHS spending on agency nurses recommends NLHS reduce that reliance and significant progress has already been taken in that regard: 12 of 15 recommendations have already been implemented, an RFP has been awarded to perform the forensic audit, and we have also started a comprehensive review, in part of to ensure that the recommendations of the Auditor General are fully implemented.

A new collective agreement has been reached with RNUNL for nurses, worth an additional \$110 million a year in compensation and benefits.

In September 2022, an agreement with the RNUNL was signed to provide a wage premium to RNs that accept temporary locum positions in the Labrador-Grenfell Zone and central, an area of high need. Evaluation results show the pilot has reduced reliance on agency nurses, sustained quality services, and provided local staff with time off.

Our government also launched a new Nurse Practitioner funding pilot last month that will further increase access to primary care by compensating independent nurse practitioners for providing medically necessary services. As a result, patients won't have to pay for the service.

These measures, and many more are having tangible results for patients across the province, but we aren't finished.

Among other things, in the coming year our government will not only increase the number of people connected to a family care team but will also increase incentives to recruit and retain more doctors and nurses in rural areas, and to retain doctors and nurses who are educated in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Let me finish by saying that I look forward to continuing our constructive working relationship with your leadership team at the Registered Nurses' Union of Newfoundland and Labrador. As well - and I'm sure all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will agree with me on this – I appreciate the work and commitment we see every day from people in the nursing profession. To all of you, thank you for the care, compassion and strength you bring to patients and families every single day. Your work doesn't go unnoticed.

Sincerely,
John Hogan,
Leader, Liberal Party of NL