



Yvette Coffey, President
Registered Nurses' Union of Newfoundland and Labrador
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September 23, 2025

Dear Ms. Coffey,

Thank you for sending along your questionnaire on behalf of your members. As I am sure you are aware, the NDP is the party of public healthcare, and we are constantly looking for ways to support and strengthen the system. But we cannot do that without the support of nurses and other healthcare professionals, and we strive to make sure that their needs and aspirations are addressed. Please accept the following as our position on the key questions you raise.

1) Will your party commit to implementing a permanent, sustainable funding model for Nurse Practitioners that allows them to provide timely, equitable care — particularly in underserved communities?

Yes. Though we would consult with nurse practitioners and their union in the design of the system, we envision one that allows them to bill MCP for their services, much like the one currently in place for physicians. It would allow nurse practitioners to use a blended capitation model for compensation. The NL NDP would work to implement policy changes to support nurse practitioners recruitment, retention and integration into the public healthcare system, including sustainable funding within the first two years of forming government.

2) Will your party commit to establishing a permanent, province-wide travel locum program that allows registered nurses and nurse practitioners to provide primary care and essential services in rural, remote, and underserved communities?

Yes. We were disappointed that the provincial government had not taken any action to expand on the successes of the pilot program in Labrador, especially when over 80 per cent of nurses are willing to participate. We see it as a feasible, flexible model for providing primary care in rural and remote regions. The NDP would roll out the program gradually, region by region, starting with the areas in greatest need. Our goal is to complete the expansion over a four-year mandate and pay nurses and nurse practitioners the same premium that is currently offered in Labrador.

3) Will your party commit to completing the core staffing review within six months of forming government?

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Absolutely. We look forward to seeing the results of the core staffing review and using them to inform a staffing strategy that uses our nursing workforce in the most efficient way possible. We commit to using this information right away in a collaborative manner by working with the RNU and nurses on the front lines, to develop a plan that works for nurses and improves patient care.

4) Will your party commit to enacting safe hours of work legislation for nurses, similar to legislation in safety-sensitive fields like aviation and transportation?

Yes. The NDP will commit to working with the RNU and other stakeholders to draft effective safe hours legislation that boosts worker satisfaction and improves patient care. This includes establishing limits on consecutive work hours and stopping mandatory overtime. This is a safety issue, not just for nurses, but also for patients. We support your position that prolonged shifts increase the risk of medical errors and harm to your members and all health care workers in similar situations. We believe that such legislation would be increasingly feasible as we enact our NDP Cares plan to tackle the vacancies in our public healthcare system (see below for more details). That's why we would aim to pass legislation in the middle of a four-year term and make it operational within one year after that.

Our proposed legislation and regulations would limit the number of consecutive work hours to 12 per shift, a maximum of four successive shifts, and a minimum of 11 hours of rest between shifts, as recommended by the Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions. We would also explore requirements that include mandatory use of comprehensive fatigue management programs.

5) Will your party commit to ending the reliance on mandatory overtime as a staffing tool, and investing in proper workforce planning?

We believe that mandatory overtime reduces the morale of nurses, leading to burnout and the exodus from the public system that we've seen over the last few years. It also jeopardizes nurses and patient care and safety. That's why New Democrats will work with the RNU and others to end mandated overtime.

The NDP Cares plan for healthcare (please consult our platform document) is designed to boost recruitment and strengthen retention by improving working conditions, creating financial incentives, intensifying recruitment in our health professional schools, and bringing front-line workers into the decision-making process that affect how they do their work. As more people enter and re-enter the public workforce, the need for mandatory overtime will inevitably

decrease. We would also use the nursing core staffing review, as well as the health human resource plan, to guide strategic hiring practices going forward.

6) Will your party commit to establishing safe nurse-patient ratios that reflect the acuity and care needs of patients and support retention?

Yes, as part of a robust safe staffing framework as outlined by your union, this issue speaks to nurse retention, a more positive and safe work environment and improved patient care. Those are issues the NL NDP wholeheartedly supports. The NL NDP would consider only those ratios or ratio-setting frameworks backed up by research, supported by the RNU NL, and proven to result in nurse and patient safety. We would work collaboratively with appropriate stakeholders to enshrine the chosen ratios or frameworks in legislation, and find the resources to make sure that these ratios are then achieved by the end of a four-year term.

7) Will your party commit to hiring all nursing graduates into full-time, permanent positions?

Absolutely. As part of our NDP Cares plan to fix our broken healthcare system, we would hire new recruiters for the medical, nursing, and other schools that would begin relationships with incoming students in year one of their studies. We would also take these recruiters, as well as those scattered within NLHS, and re-organize them into a single Office for Medical Professional Recruitment, so that they avoid duplicating effort and work together towards a common goal while sharing expertise and resources.

8) Will your party commit to engaging in good-faith collective bargaining with RNUNL and addressing member priorities? What principles and outcomes will guide your negotiating mandate?

Yes. As the party of labour, the NL NDP commits to bargaining in good faith with the RNU and all unions representing public sector workers. Indeed we respect all workers' right to bargain for a fair Collective Agreement. We do not support forcing workers back to work, when they are exercising those rights. We also believe that nurses deserve equal pay for equal work, fair and competitive compensation, guaranteed access to vacation leave, and a respectful and non-violent workplace culture

Our guiding principles in all negotiations would be to:

- Secure an equitable deal for nurses that makes them feel valued for the hard work they do;

- Ensure staffing and retention is addressed both in the collective bargaining process, and well as through legislation as outlined throughout our responses;
- Ensure the highest level of care possible and improved outcomes for patients; and
- Support, and strengthen a universal, public healthcare system.

9) In light of the Auditor General's findings, will your party commit to holding those responsible for inappropriate or potentially fraudulent private agency contracts accountable?

New Democrats will not stand idle while our healthcare system is neglected like this. That's why Jordan Brown initially called for the AG to investigate these contracts all the way back in 2023.

We were shocked and disgusted by the amount of waste, mismanagement, and potentially criminal activity uncovered by the Auditor General when the report came out in June. Leader Jim Dinn called it "appalling - full stop." He also called for the RNC to investigate the claims of potential fraud. In government, we would ensure that law enforcement conducts its own thorough investigation to see whether charges need to be laid.

Going forward, we would restore trust in the healthcare system with improved training around conflict of interest for NLHS staff, strengthened checks and balances for approval and monitoring of all procurement contracts, and providing more transparency to the public around how the NLHS governs itself.

10) Where do you see the nursing profession and the public healthcare system in four years?

With the NDP Cares plan for healthcare, we see a more stable and sustainable healthcare system in the longer term. We pledge to reduce the number of vacancies in our healthcare system by 1,000 in four years. Just some of the proposals we have for achieving our goal are:

- Setting up an independent Health Sector Safety Council, especially to deal with workplace violence, and occupational safety and health issues, diseases and hazards specific to workers in our health care system.
- Making shift flexibility a reality by allowing nurses greater power to self-schedule;
- Committing to a review of the Job Evaluation System applied to allied health professionals in 2015;
- Reducing the burden on nurses within the system by working with other health care unions to explore ways to reduce workloads, and address vacancies, recruitment and retention issues, and

- Implementing support and mentorship systems for new health profession graduates.

We also believe that the vacancies in the healthcare system are partly the result of a top-down approach to management within the NLHS. We hear nurses and other health professionals when they say that they feel unnoticed or that the government just doesn't listen to them. That's why we pledge to bring nurses and other front-line healthcare professions into decision-making processes that affect them and how they work. We'll rely on those voices by having management work collaboratively and consult regularly with frontline employees and their unions to improve the work environment, quality of life, and patient care.

11) What does your party identify as the most urgent challenge facing nursing and the public healthcare system in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Our party has repeatedly said that the failure to address the social determinants of health is the most urgent challenge facing our healthcare system. While the Health Accord acknowledges this and the current government frequently uses the term, we believe that there has not been enough concrete action to improve the foundations on which our health is based. New Democrats agree with all the research that states that people who have the basics in life, like adequate shelter and nutritious food, have lower stress and better health outcomes. This results in fewer chronic and acute illnesses, and fewer visits to clinics and hospitals, thereby easing the workload of health professionals. That's why we would address the social determinants of health through a number of initiatives, such as:

- Scaling up the construction of non-market, affordable housing;
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$22 per hour by 2029;
- Removing the provincial portion of HST from all sources of home heating;
- Removing the provincial portion of HST from children's clothing and car seats; and
- Fighting homelessness by making sure that the most vulnerable get the wraparound services they need, like counselling, job training, or other supports.

We can't afford not to invest in all of these issues if we are serious about addressing the crisis in our public health care system. To do anything less, eventually costs taxpayers more, and has huge too many negative consequences for the health and well-being of our population, and the health care workers who struggle to provide patient care because of a broken system - a system that we know is not beyond repair.

12) Will your party commit to phasing out the use of agency nurses as a primary staffing strategy?



Yes. We plan to phase out the use of agency nurses as a primary staffing strategy within the first two years of forming government. To help us achieve this goal, we would rely more on our underutilized casual nurses. We would immediately step up recruitment within the nursing schools and provide current students with bursaries - along with pay for their clinical placements - so more of them can afford to accept internships in rural, hard-to-fill rural and remote positions.

We also believe that more nurses would return to the public system from the agencies if working conditions improved. That's why we would also create support and mentorship systems for new nursing graduates, step up recruitment in allied health professions to ease the workload of nurses, and create new systems of governance within NLHS that would make management work collaboratively and consult regularly with frontline employees to improve work environment, quality of life, and patient care.

13) Will your party commit to paying nursing students for their clinical placements, acknowledging the direct contribution students make to patient care and correcting the gender-based inequities in how student work is valued?

Yes. The NL NDP has committed to paying nursing students - along with students in social work, pharmacy, and paramedicine - for their clinical placements. We would mandate the NLHS to implement this policy and provide them with the necessary funding to do so within the first year of an NDP government. Funding would come from the money saved from the phase-out of the use of agency nurses.

Once again, I thank you for your interest in the NL NDP and our plan to get a better deal for ordinary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. When we form the government, one of our first priorities will be to meet with the RNU and other unions and associations representing health professionals to discuss the details of our plan and map out clear timelines for completion. I also encourage you to have a look at our fully-costed platform, which we plan to release this Friday. I believe that it contains many other policies than those mentioned above that would appeal to you and your members.

Sincerely,

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

Jim Dinn
Leader, NL NDP, Candidate for St. John's Centre