

In July 2003, alPHa sent a set of six questions to all three major party leaders asking them to declare their parties intentions in key areas of public health. Below are their answers. They have not been edited and are presented as they were submitted.

Question 1 Please summarize your party's strategy for strengthening public health infrastructure in Ontario.

Liberal Ontario Liberals are committed strengthening Ontario's public health infrastructure. We will put an end to the Eves record of downloading and cutbacks.

Enclosed is a copy of our health care platform, The Health Care We Need. In it we have committed to giving the Chief Medical Officer of Health real independence to protect Ontarians. The Chief Medical Officer will no longer be an appointee of the government - but rather an independent officer who will report annually on the state of public health in Ontario. Further details on our platform can be found at www.choosechange.ca.

Furthermore, we look forward to the review of how Ontario's health care system was able to respond to the SARS outbreak. In government, we are committed to acting upon the recommendations of Justice Archie Campbell's Inquiry

**New
Democratic
Party**

Howard Hampton and the NDP believe Ontario must get back to the job of helping people maintain their health in the first place – not just treating the sick – by introducing an ambitious preventative health plan, including a comprehensive tobacco control strategy. None of this can be achieved without first strengthening Ontario's public health infrastructure.

That's why we will ensure that our public health units have increased, multi-year and stable funding so they can plan ahead to deliver the programs that prevent illness in the first place.

The NDP will create an independent provincial board of health to appoint a truly independent chief medical officer of health and ensure stable, multi-year funding of health prevention and promotion programs.

We will invest in the capacity of the Ministry's public health department to ensure there is adequate expertise and resources to support work in the field.

We will continue to advocate for a federal arm's length agency and for greater funding and leadership on the part of the federal government in public health.

**Progressive
Conservative**

Please see page 7 for the full response.

Question 2

The first recommendation of the Walkerton Inquiry was to ensure that each board of Health have a full-time, fully qualified medical officer of health, as required by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. There are still several boards without one, a situation no different than it was two years ago. How does your government plan to meet this recommendation?

Liberal

It is simply inexcusable that more than three years since the Walkerton tragedy, the Eves government has yet to take the necessary steps to ensure that every vacant Medical Officer of Health position has been filled.

Ontario Liberals are fully committed to the implementation of each and every recommendation put forward by Justice O'Connor in the Walkerton Reports, including Recommendation 1 of the Part 1 Report proposing that any vacant Medical Officer of Health positions are quickly filled with full-time Medical Officer of Health

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The NDP will make it a priority to ensure that every board of health has a full-time, fully qualified medical officer of health. We will ensure that Medical Officers of Health are well compensated, making recruitment and retention easier.

**Progressive
Conservative**

Please see page 7 for the full response.

Question 3

The second recommendation of the Walkerton Inquiry was to examine the current situation of non-completion of the minimum standards for public health programming as set out in *the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines*. Several revisions remain unreleased and public health service delivery remains, on average, about 20% below the minimum requirements, How does your party plan to meet this recommendation?

Liberal

The Eves Government has been warned time and again that current provincial funding for public health units is not adequate to cover the costs of mandatory public health programs as set out in the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines. Problems associated with underfunding of Ontario's public health units have only been exacerbated by the onset of such unexpected health risks like West Nile Virus and SARS.

Ontario Liberals committed to the implementation of Justice O'Connor's recommendation that the Ministry of Health randomly assess boards of public health in Ontario on a regular basis to ensure they are complying with the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines.

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Meeting this recommendation requires the political will to make public health funding a priority. The NDP's priority will be to ensure public health units have increased, multi-year and stable funding so they can plan ahead to ensure minimum standards for public health are not only met, but surpassed.

**Progressive
Conservative**

Please see page 7 for the full response..

Question 4

The Ontario Medical Association has called for province-wide standards for 100% smoke-free public and work places. How does your party plan to answer the call?

Liberal

Tobacco use kills at least 12,000 Ontario residents every year and cost our health care system and economy of the province nearly \$4 billion in direct costs and lost productivity. In response to this problem, experts have widely recommended a comprehensive approach to this problem.

Our health care platform, *The Health Care We Need*, includes an aggressive anti-smoking strategy. As part of that strategy we will pass legislation that will ban smoking in all work and public places this includes restaurants, bars, bowling alleys, billiard halls, casinos and bingos. Additionally, we will ban countertop and behind the counter retail display of tobacco products and launch an enhanced mass media and public education program to prevent young people from starting to smoke, and to encourage those who smoke to kick the habit.

New Democratic Party

The NDP is committed to making all public and work places in Ontario 100% smoke free.

New Democrats share the OMA’s concern about the enormous impact second hand smoke has on the health of citizens of Ontario. And we also believe that this is a matter the Minister of Health must address through provincial legislation. When it was introduced, the NDP Government’s anti-smoking legislation was the toughest of its kind in North America. In the last ten years, public concern about second-hand smoke has dramatically increased. Many municipalities have passed controversial by-laws.

New Democrats believe municipalities and public health units should not bear the burden of taking action that is the responsibility of the provincial government. The checkerboard application of by-laws across Ontario has pitted community against community, business against business. We need to level the playing field. That’s why the NDP believes it is time the provincial government assumed its responsibility for these issues instead of pushing these decisions onto cash-strapped municipalities, already bearing a disproportionate share of the cost of public health.

The NDP’s **publicpower** Practical Solutions to Stop Smoking will include:

- Make all public and work places in Ontario smoke free
- A comprehensive tobacco control strategy that helps smokers quit and stay quit
- More cessation clinics
- A 24-hour a day counseling service
- Reducing smoking by young people by requiring retailers to keep tobacco products out of sight behind counters.

Progressive Conservative

Please see page 7 for the full response.

Question 5

alPHA's Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health has called for the inclusion of varicella, meningitis and pneumococcal vaccines in routine and universal public schedule of childhood immunizations. How does your party plan to answer that call?

Liberal

The use of safe and effective vaccines in Ontario has improved the health of children, has reduced health care costs, and has made savings available for the care and treatment of people with other, more chronic illnesses.

In our health care platform, *The Health Care We Need*, we have committed to making sure that Ontarians have access to vaccines and screenings that work. We will start by providing varicella and meningitis vaccines available for children.

**New
Democratic
Party**

The NDP believes the Conservatives failure to adequately fund vaccines in Ontario is putting families – many of whom cannot afford the high cost of these vaccines -- at risk.

NDP Health Critic Shelley Martel has led the call for full funding for meningitis C vaccination and education programs in Ontario, twice introducing The Michael Maxwell Bill for Meningitis Vaccination. The NDP will immediately fund vaccinations for those ages two months to 20 years, the group at highest risk of contracting this debilitating disease. And we are committed to working with alPHA to develop a plan to introduce varicella and pneumococcal vaccines in the near future.

**Progressive
Conservative**

Please see page 7 for the full response.

Question 6 alPHa's passed a resolution this year calling for the establishment of provincial health goals and objectives, with requirements and standards for all government ministries and agencies. How does your party plan to answer that call?

Liberal In our health care platform, *The Health Care We Need*, we have committed to establishing a Health Standards Council. This council will report annually and report directly to the people of Ontario on the state of the health care system and the health of Ontarians. The Council will be independent and will report directly to Ontarians. It will be made up of experts from all fields and include citizen representation.

New Democratic Party The NDP's Health Care Standards Commissioner would work in consultation with alPHa to establish provincial health goals and objectives, with requirements and standards for all government ministries and agencies. Please see our platform at www.publicpower.ca to learn more about our plan to appoint an Independent Health Care Standards Commissioner in Ontario.

Progressive Conservative Please see page 7 for the full response.

Additional Information

NDP Plan – More Detail

- We will ensure that dollars from the Conservatives' latest tobacco tax increase go into a dedicated health care fund.
- We will enforce the law, and ensure that all public health units have a full-time Medical Officer of Health.
- We will hire more scientists and researchers to staff the government's public health department, and re-open the public health labs closed by the Conservatives, so Ontario doesn't have to rely on private pharmaceutical companies and private labs.
- Keep our drinking water public and protect water from its source to the tap
- Shut down Ontario's coal-fired power generating stations by 2007 and convert them to cleaner gas to save countless lives.
- Introduce food labelling laws so we know what we eat.
- Find practical solutions to some of the social causes of bad health – poverty, homelessness, inequality, illiteracy to name a few.



The Ontario PC Party
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September 25, 2003

Dr. A. Hukowich, President
Association Of Local Public Health Agencies
425 University Ave.
Suite 502
Toronto, ON M5G 1T6

Dear Dr. Hukowich:

Thank you for your interest in finding out more about *The Road Ahead: the Ernie Eves Plan for Ontario*.

We are proud of the progress we have made, the hope and prosperity we have helped bring back to Ontario, and the reputation we have earned for fulfilling our commitments. *The Road Ahead* will guide me and our Party as we work to build a better future for all Ontarians. *The Road Ahead* is our plan to take us into that brighter future and help to fulfill Ontario's promise.

I am pleased to respond to your request for information about our party's policies. The most essential service government can provide is universal access to excellent, publicly funded health care. Despite a lack of fair funding from Ottawa, we now invest a record \$28 billion a year in our health care system. We are investing almost half the total provincial budget, to meet the needs of our growing and aging population, and the demands for new and more expensive drugs and medical technologies.

We'll provide even more of the priority services Ontarians and their families value most – doctors, nurses and hospitals. We will create a better health care system, one that provides better services to Ontarians, on the Road Ahead. We pledge to continue providing the health care funding and quality the people of Ontario need with or without Ottawa's help.

We will measure the success of our health care system by its results: by the waiting times for services, the health of our people, and the access that people have to doctors, nurses, hospitals and new health care technology. We will guarantee that waiting times will not exceed medically recommended limits for general surgery, cataract surgery, cancer treatment and hip and knee replacement surgeries. Our waiting time guarantee will apply in every part of the province. We'll do anything needed to meet that guarantee.



EXPERIENCE FOR THE ROAD AHEAD.

As you noted in your letter, we are prepared to take invest in priority health care services through an Infectious Diseases Emergency Plan, Initiatives to respond to West Nile Virus, coverage of influenza vaccines, and colorectal cancer screening. On *The Road Ahead* we will address many other critical other public health issues.

We will implement all 121 recommendations from Justice O'Connor's two Walkerton Reports, including the recruitment of more than 50 permanent drinking water inspectors and 10 drinking water supervisors, as well as more than doubling the number of municipal water systems inspectors.

We're proud of our record of investing in Ontario's present and future through our children. However, experts tell us that our programs for human development would be more effective if they were part of a coordinated effort to help every child reach his or her potential on *The Road Ahead* - We will create a new Cabinet post of Minister for Human Development.

The new Minister will be responsible for all human development programs now in place at the ministries of Health and Community, Family and Children's Services, including the Early Years program and the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative. The Minister will also have a broad and powerful mandate to review ALL proposed government policy (including education and health policies) from the human development perspective, helping us make sure that all services and programs work together for the benefit of the next generation of Ontarians, and better meet their needs in the future. From infancy to school age and beyond, Ontario's children will be supported in reaching their full potential.

We will also create a Children's Health Network, linking all of the children's hospitals across Ontario to share resources, knowledge and capabilities to provide the best possible health care for our children. To support the health care needs of children in the north, we will invest nearly \$6.5 million to support the Electronic Child Health Network North, providing an electronic link between health care professionals and families in the north, and hundreds of pediatricians and health care professionals in southern Ontario.

I invite you to read more about our plan to secure Ontario's future, to build on our hard-earned gains, and to continue working towards the goal we all share... to make Ontario the best place in the world to live, to work, to invest and to raise a family. Attached are copies of *The Road Ahead* Policy Papers; *Better Health Care for You and Your Family* and *Helping Families and Children*.

Should you like more information, we would be pleased to send you a copy of any of our other Policy Papers on specific issue areas. Please visit our website at www.ontariopc.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ernie Eves". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left and another extending to the right.

Ernie Eves
Leader of the Ontario PC Party