



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY *Under embargo until speech begins*

Date: **April 7, 2015 - Hunter River**

Good morning.

I'm very happy to be here this morning ... with the full Liberal Team ... in beautiful Hunter River.

Today I want to talk about the importance of timely access to quality health care ... and to outline some of the priorities that the Liberal Party will pursue in this area if elected on May 4.

I am convinced that a series of steps ... taken in a determined and coordinated fashion ... will significantly improve both access and quality for all Islanders.

I want to speak about front-line services.

Prince Edward Island's healthcare professionals are highly skilled, dedicated, and provide quality care to Islanders.

Ultimately the success of our healthcare system is determined on the front-lines ... that place where the patient and his or her family directly interacts with the doctors and nurses and the many other professionals within our system.

And that is why we need to do everything in our power to concentrate our resources on the front lines.

Significant progress in this area has been made, but if we are elected on May 4th there are a number of additional things that the Liberal Party will do. I'd like to highlight some of our priorities.

Specialists are crucially important in ensuring timely access to care. We will place renewed emphasis on recruiting specialists in key areas tied to wait times.

For example, an additional anesthesiologist will be recruited to the Prince County Hospital to allow us to make greater use of that facility for elective surgeries.

In addition to anesthesiologists, we will work to recruit specialists across the system in other fields such as rheumatology, oncology, neurology, psychiatry and obstetrics.

We will work with UPEI and Holland College to recruit and retain nurse practitioners, BNs, RNs, LPNs and RCWs.

Leader's Remarks



On the services side, we will allocate resources to reduce wait times for elective procedures. We have had significant success in reducing wait times for some elective procedures, but we must do more to reduce the wait for cataract, hip and knee surgery in particular.

In order to accomplish this, we will recruit another orthopedic surgeon and open an additional operating room at the QEH.

We will make a significant capital investment at the PEI Cancer Treatment Center – a new linear accelerator - to improve cancer care for Islanders.

And we will reduce the waiting time for MRI and CAT scan testing and results. Let me speak for just a minute about MRI tests in particular.

Everyone knows that there is great demand for MRI testing and the waiting list can sometimes be long. By adding resources so that tests can be performed during the evening hours, we will reduce or potentially even eliminate the waiting list.

In the area of special needs for youth, we will place additional emphasis on reducing the wait for pre-school autism assessments ... physiotherapy ... speech language pathology and audiology.

Let me talk about doctors. We have made significant progress over the past several years in recruiting and retaining family doctors in particular. As we move forward, we need to place greater emphasis on recruiting doctors to specific parts of our Province.

Over the next mandate we will continue to recruit physicians to rural communities.

Tackling this issue of timely access means that we must also continue to expand the scope of practice of key health care professionals such as nurse practitioners, pharmacists and paramedics.

This will free up physicians to concentrate on more serious illnesses.

Nurse practitioners are already making a significant and valuable contribution to our system. We will take steps to add 10 additional nurse practitioners to the system ... increase the number practicing in rural areas ... and expand their scope of practice so that they can provide a more comprehensive suite of services in collaboration with family doctors.

Our community pharmacists also play an important role. We will expand the list of ailments treatable by pharmacists ... increase the number of medication reviews conducted by pharmacists for seniors ... and expand pharmacists' role in vaccinations and immunizations.



As we move forward, paramedics will also be given an expanded role in emergency medication administration.

Our rural communities have made it very clear that they want paramedics to have an increased presence in their communities. We will make sure that happens and I will have more to say on this subject tomorrow in Souris.

Ultimately, in order to ensure timely access to quality care, the Liberal Party believes that we must focus on supporting front-line services ... make sure we have that right professionals in the right place ... and then let those professionals fully utilize their valuable skills.

But beyond this, there is one other crucially important component. If we are going to succeed in this area, we must also expand our focus on wellness and disease prevention. A healthier population places less demands upon our healthcare system.

That is why the Liberal Party is proposing a number of additional measures in this area. We will expand the use of public infrastructure such as schools for off-hours physical activity.

We will promote increased physical activity and smoking cessation initiatives, with a particular emphasis on youth.

And we will continue to promote healthy eating through public outreach and medical professionals.

Now how are we going to pay for these initiatives?

First of all, it is important to note that our annual healthcare budget exceeds \$620 million dollars a year. That means that over the next mandate, government will spend approximately \$2.5 billion dollars to provide healthcare services to Islanders. These investments are significant, but necessary to ensure that islanders have access to the services they need, when and where they need them.

In my view, if we can focus on improving the efficiency of our system-wide services, reduce bureaucracy, decrease payments for out-of -Province services and expand our emphasis on wellness and disease prevention, we can implement these improvements with minimal additional long-term cost to the budget.

Ultimately if we can ... over time ... meet Islanders' health needs early and reduce or at least slow the growth of demands upon the system and ... at the same time ... work to make that system more efficient ... we can make meaningful improvements in the health and treatment of Islanders.

Fellow Islanders ... let's get to work on this issue. Let's Work Together.

Thank you for coming.