

1. Indigenous Health

- a. How will your party improve health equity for Indigenous peoples in Alberta?
 - b. How will your party ensure Indigenous peoples receive the care they need, when they need it, in their own communities?
 - c. How will your government address racism and discrimination in our health care system?
 - d. What will your government do to support Indigenous communities in addressing the opioid crisis?
- We're proud of the partnership we've put in place with First Nations over the past four years, and a re-elected UCP government will continue to build on it.
 - We've shown our commitment to that partnership throughout our term in government, including, for example, the announcement of nearly \$8 million in 2021 to support Indigenous-led efforts to care for their mental health and address the painful legacy of residential schools.
 - We're proud to walk a better path together with First Nations, not just in words or grant funding, but standing with them and announcing new joint agreements to build continuing care facilities, surgical clinics, and addiction-treatment facilities to provide culturally safe and appropriate services for their members, as part of our commitment to build a stronger publicly funded health system for all Albertans. We support AHS in their work to ensure zero tolerance for racism in the service-delivery system, but we're doing so much more than that.
 - Most recently Premier Smith was honoured to stand with four Chiefs to announce new measures to address the addiction crisis, including new First Nations recovery communities.
 - In 2022, Alberta Health invested more than \$24M in Indigenous health-related programs such as Indigenous youth suicide prevention, funding primary care in Indigenous communities, and community-led supports to cope with trauma arising from lived experience and identification of graves at residential schools.
 - Modernizing Alberta's Primary Care System (MAPS) included an Indigenous panel, with members from multiple First Nation and Métis communities, to specifically inform how to provide better, more culturally appropriate primary care to Alberta's Indigenous people.
 - Recommendations made by the panel will be further consulted on with Indigenous communities to establish critical priorities and timelines, then implemented.

2. Rural Health Care

- a. How will your government ensure rural Albertans get the care they need, when they need it, in their own communities?
 - b. What specifically will your government do to retain physicians in rural and remote areas?
 - c. What specifically will your government do to recruit physicians to rural and remote areas?
- We support the goal of providing every Albertan with access to a family doctor as part of a medical home and a primary care team.
 - We're working to strengthen rural health care across the board, including training more physicians and nurses in programs targeted at rural practice, investing more in recruitment and retention, expanding the health care team with nurse practitioners and others, and increasing capacity in rural facilities.
 - Rural health care, including rural physician recruitment and retention, is a long-standing challenge across Canada, and the pandemic has made it even tougher. We can't just wish it away with empty promises, for example to build new clinics when we're struggling to staff the ones we have. It's going to take long-term planning and hard work in partnership with communities, and with physicians and other professionals, and we're doing that work.
 - Our new agreement with the AMA last year is weighted toward family physicians, including targeted new funding for rural physician recruitment and retention. It's a foundation to build on, and we're planning further investments in the coming year guided by the MAPS primary-care renewal process.
 - We've announced new training programs for physicians and nurses in satellite sites outside Edmonton and Calgary to target young people for rural practice, especially people who come from smaller communities in the first place.
 - We're seeing success in recruiting physicians and other professionals to centres like Lethbridge and Red Deer, in partnership with community leaders and RhPAP. We need to do more, so we're funding new approaches like RESIDE, which is attracting strong interest with new expanded criteria for applications.
 - We're expanding the primary care team by adding nurse practitioners and creating new options for pharmacists and others to help increase access to primary care.
 - Budget 2023 includes new funding specifically for rural health care, including \$105M over three years for the Rural Health Facilities Revitalization Program. We're committed to increasing capacity in rural facilities, including specifically doing more surgeries through the AB Surgical Initiative in under-used operating rooms in smaller centres, and we're already seeing results.

- Implement the Modernizing Alberta’s Primary Care System (MAPS) recommendations. \$125M already committed to start the work from the early wins interim report. Additional funding will also come as part of the \$24B health care deal with Ottawa.
- Multiple recommendations coming out of the MAPS initiative, which engaged HCPs from across the spectrum, locally, nationally and internationally, will be implemented by our government to improve health care delivery and outcomes, especially in rural and Indigenous communities with a goal of achieving equity of access to equitable quality of services no matter who you are or where in the province you live.
- Accelerate the process of restoring decision-making authority to the local level, and incentivize regional innovation based on the needs of local populations.
- Improve integrated health workforce planning and forecasting, working with municipalities, doctors and allied health professionals to identify further strategies that will attract and retain health care workers in rural Alberta, while leveraging the scope of allied professionals and streamlining immigration and certification processes.
- The UCP invested \$20M in Budget 2023 to further support Primary Care Networks.
- On the recommendation of the MAPS panel, moving to a medical home model utilizing NPs, PAs, RNs and other allied health care workers.
- Jason Copping spent last summer and fall touring rural Alberta, hosting 44 sessions and meeting with 1,100 Albertans, including over 600 front line health care workers to understand the challenges they were facing and listen to the solutions they were proposing.
- We have committed to an investment of \$10M over the next two years that will help develop a province-wide midwives strategy and provide improved healthcare support for women by adding more obstetrics doctors for communities in need. This will include Lethbridge and other rural and mid-sized cities. These initiatives will assist in reducing the pressure on obstetrics, ERs and primary care, particularly in rural Alberta.

3. Pediatric Mental Health

- a. How will your government address the pediatric mental health crisis and ensure Alberta’s children and youth get the care they need both in schools/communities and the health care system?
 - b. How will your government assist parents and families to guide children through their journeys in the mental health care system?
- We recognize there's real strain on mental health services for kids and youth; the strain has increased in the past three years and we're proud to lead the country in responding to it.

- In 2020 at the start of the pandemic, the UCP government announced \$53M in mental health funding for children and youth - at the time, more than all other provinces combined.
- Budget 2023 continued to prioritize children's mental health, including \$92M over three years for critical mental health supports for children and youth in partnership with CASA Mental Health, \$10M a year for The Summit: Marian & Jim Sinneave Centre for Youth Resilience, and \$4M to expand the Integrated School Support Program (ISSP). In total, through Budget 2023, Alberta Mental Health and Addiction is providing \$14M to expand mental health supports in schools across the province.
- Invested \$54M over three years for pediatric acute care capacity at the Calgary Children's Hospital and Edmonton's Stollery Children's Hospital, as well as \$3M in planning money to build a new standalone Stollery Children's Hospital.
- Newborn screenings are so important because the sooner a child is diagnosed, the sooner life-saving treatments can begin. Alberta already leads the country with automatic newborn screenings for 22 conditions. The UCP will expand that by five more diseases.
- A re-elected United Conservative government will also add funding for testing and educational supports for children with autism and other complex needs to ensure there are improved wraparound supports integrating community, education, and health care.
- We are committed to providing two years of stimulus funding to enable recruitment and deployment of non-physician staff into patient medical homes, expanding the team-based model that will enable more timely access to family medical care. This may include both clinical and support staff, and PCNs would be expected to work with member physicians to determine how best to meet local needs.
- We will expand existing integrated health, community and social services models that provide comprehensive services and outreach to people who face barriers to accessing healthcare (due to ethnicity, language, refugee status, poverty, trauma, social isolation, addictions, mental health challenges, literacy and education, lack of appropriate housing, etc.)
- We commit to building a provincial primary health care virtual program to improve access, facilitate attachment of unattached patients, and provide additional supports to patient medical homes.
- There's more to come. Watch our website, <https://www.unitedconservative.ca/> for news on further supports for children's mental health.

4. Health Human Resources

- a. What strategies will your government employ to make Alberta an attractive place for physicians and medical learners to come and stay?

- b. How will your government identify and remove impediments to practice in Alberta for medical learners and practicing physicians?
- c. To help re-establish safe, respectful working environments for health care workers, will your government commit to upholding federal legislation (Bill C-3) to protect our providers in Alberta?
- Alberta is the best place in Canada to build a career in health care and we're committed to keeping it that way.
 - We're continuing to build up our health care workforce, to deliver on our promise to Albertans: a stronger publicly funded health system, with better access to care.
 - We'll continue to build on our partnership with the AMA as we implement the new agreement in 2022 supported by 70% of physicians who voted on it. We were also proud to support AHS in signing new collective agreements with the entire health workforce in 2022.
 - The AMA agreement will see spending on physicians increase by at least \$750M from pre-pandemic levels and keep our doctors among the best paid in Canada. We need to do more, and we'll keep working to increase the supply of physicians and work with them to renew primary care and improve access for patients across the system.
 - We're adding 120 new physician seats at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, an increase of 1/3 by 2025. We're investing another \$113M to add 100 residency training spaces for newly graduated doctors over 3 years. Budget 2023 includes \$72M to create more than 3,400 new seats in post-secondary health care programs in total.
 - We're working with the health professions to make it easier for internationally trained doctors and nurses to work in Alberta. We're already the most welcoming province in Canada for IMGs, and changes announced recently by the CPSA will help attract more. Changes recently announced by CRNA led to a flood of over 1,000 new IENs registered in just a few weeks. Those nurses will make a real difference as they move into jobs, and there's more to come.
 - We're making progress, adding 700 physicians and 8,500 staff over our first term, including 800 nurses and 254 doctors in 2022, in spite of the strain of the pandemic.
 - Budget 2023 funds even more growth, including our commitment to give Albertans the best access to scheduled surgery through their publicly funded health system that's ever been achieved in any province.
 - Budget 2023 funded a Health Workforce strategy that would attract and retain health care professionals, including family doctors.
 - The Health Workforce Strategy's framework is designed around five pillars each with objectives, actions, and commitments for the future to provide a path forward through immediate challenges and build a sustainable health system for everyone.

- This strategy will build a resilient and sustainable health care system that can provide every Albertan with access to a “health home” that can deliver the care they need when and where they need it.

5. Care of the Elderly

- a. How will your government ensure Alberta’s seniors receive the care they need, when they need it, in their own communities so that they can choose to remain at home?
 - b. How will your government support family caregivers to better sustain the care they provide, and to maintain their own health and well being?
 - c. What will your government do to ensure Alberta’s seniors are better cared for in any future public health emergency?
- Budget 2023 provides a massive 15% increase in funding for continuing care, including respite care that supports family caregivers. It's a bridge between the capacity increases we've made over the past four years, and the larger transformation based on our Facility-Based Continuing Care Review, to meet the needs of seniors over the next 20 years.
 - Continuing care is essential for seniors and others and it's essential to the functioning of the system overall because there are always patients waiting in hospital to be discharged into continuing care, and when those discharges are delayed, that means delays for patients waiting to be admitted from emergency and EMS.
 - We added over 1,000 new continuing care beds and one million hours of home care last year. We're already placing more patients into continuing care every quarter than under the NDP, and we've cut the wait for placement for patients in hospital from 46 days in 2018-19 to 32 days.
 - But that's just the start. We're investing in state-of-the-art facilities including the Gene Zwozdesky Centre in Edmonton and Bridgeland Riverview in Calgary, and we're moving forward with the biggest expansion and modernization of continuing care in a generation, based on the continuing care review.
 - The Review was hailed by experts like Dr. Carole Estabrooks for putting the quality of life of residents at the centre of the system. We've already made changes based on learnings from the pandemic, including ending admissions to "ward" (four-bed) rooms to promote infection control. In the longer term we're moving toward all private rooms and beginning the system transformation laid out in the review, including more hours of care per resident and more long-term home care to keep people living independently for as long as possible.

- The new Continuing Care Act establishes a new framework for all levels of care. An unprecedented level of consultations with the continuing care sector have been ongoing in drafting the regulations to make sure we get it right.
- \$1B in operating funding and \$595M in capital funding committed in budget 2023 to begin transforming our continuing care system to help more people receive care in their homes or communities, grow the work force, increase choice for Albertans and improve both quality of care and quality of life.
- Funding will also support initiatives that increase the hours of care provided to continuing care residents, expand access to community-based palliative and end-of-life care and develop smaller continuing care homes.

6. Drug Poisoning Crisis

- a. How does your party plan to deliver a comprehensive continuum of services for people who use substances?
 - b. What steps does your party plan to immediately reduce the number of drug poisoning deaths?
- The addiction crisis is one of the most challenging social issues that we face in Canada today.
 - We are building a recovery-oriented system of care that spans prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery, and yes it includes services that reduce harm as a measure of prevention.
 - Our goal through funding 10,000 more annual treatment spaces, removing the user fees to access publicly funded treatment and building more capacity, is to give you as medical professionals the tools and the spaces you need to get people into treatment and help them live a life in recovery.
 - I should also mention through our work over the last four years Alberta is the only jurisdiction in the country where anyone struggling with opioid addiction can access medication treatment on demand through the Virtual Opioid Dependency Program with no fees and no waitlist.

7. Primary care

- a. Albertans want access to a family doctor who is connected to a team. How will your party ensure every Albertan has a medical home?
- b. How will your party work to encourage medical students and residents to choose comprehensive family medicine in Alberta?

c. How will you financially stabilize and sustain the independent, small-business family practice offices that deliver the majority of primary care, including recognizing the increasing burden on practices of administrative requirements?

- We support the goal of providing every Albertan with access to a family doctor as part of a medical home and a primary care team.
- We'll continue to implement the new agreement with the AMA last year, with increases and targeted investments weighted toward family physicians.
- We'll make further investments in primary care guided by the MAPS primary-care renewal process. Budget 2023 provides \$125M over the next three years to start implementing MAPS recommendations, including team-based care and improved models and governance to support that type of care, and ensuring culturally appropriate care for Indigenous Peoples. We'll do more consultations and engagement in other areas addressed by the report.
- Budget 2023 includes a total of \$243M in new funding over three years to strengthen the primary health care system throughout the province, ensuring that all Albertans can access the care they need when and where they need it.
- To increase access to care, we need more physicians and other professionals. In the short term, we're working with the health professions to make it easier for internationally trained doctors and nurses to work in Alberta. We're already the most welcoming province in Canada for IMGs, and changes announced recently by the CPSA will help attract more. That will help fill residency positions in the short term, as well as practice opportunities in under-served communities. Also of note, changes recently announced by CRNA led to a flood of over 1,400 new IENs registered in just a few weeks, which will likewise help address the need for RNs in the short term.
- In the long term, we need to train our own physicians, nurses, and others. We're adding 120 new physician seats at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, an increase of 1/3 by 2025. We're investing another \$113M to add 100 residency training spaces for newly graduated doctors over three years. Budget 2023 includes \$72M to create more than 3,400 new seats in post-secondary health care programs in total.
- We are committed to providing two years of stimulus funding to enable recruitment and deployment of non-physician staff into patient medical homes, expanding the team-based model that will enable more timely access to family medical care. This may include both clinical and support staff, and PCNs would be expected to work with member physicians to determine how best to meet local needs.
- We will reinstate the PCN Operational Stability Fund policy - a contingency reserve against unexpected expenses from the current fiscal year provides timely support for operational stability, ensuring community primary care experience greater sustainability and ability to address unanticipated changes in the health needs of their patients.
- We will continue our work with the Alberta Medical Association and the Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta to expand implementation of capitation, blended

capitation and other non-FFS compensation mechanisms over the next two years for both family physicians and nurse practitioners to expand access to primary care and support expansion of team-based care.

We also need to foster an environment in our medical schools to encourage more of our medical students to pursue a career in family medicine as well as attract more IMGs in the shorter term. We need to shift our focus to primary and preventative care. This will relieve the pressures on our acute care system and result in better health outcomes for all Albertans.