



Primary Care

Handle with Care

How will we fix what's ailing our health care system?



Issue

Challenges in accessing primary care have escalated over the past three years. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans do not have a family physician. Without access to primary care, chronic conditions worsen and new concerns may not be caught until they are more difficult – or even impossible – to treat.

- Every Albertan should have a medical home to call their own with a family physician as the anchor.
- It's estimated that upwards of 650,000 Albertans are currently without a family physician or primary care provider.
- Family medicine is collapsing due to family doctor shortages, burnout and financially unstable small-business practices. Physicians need immediate and substantive support to stabilize practices and ensure longer-term sustainability.
- Without access to primary care, Albertans are turning to emergency departments for care that would be better managed by a family physician.
- Albertans are increasingly relying on allied health professionals like nurse practitioners and pharmacists. These providers are an important part of the health care team but are disconnected from the other parts of the system.
- The best approach is an integrated, physician-led team working together and sharing information.
- There is concern that the sustainability of the Patient's Medical Home in Alberta is at risk. There are issues related to payment equity, a lack of support for longitudinal care and increased expectations related to unremunerated work.
- Government has taken some actions that will play into eventual solutions. These include:
 - > Increase to priority virtual care codes.
 - > Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System. A final report has been submitted to the Minister of Health, but success will be completely dependent on proper implementation.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES & PARTIES SHOULD THEY WIN THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION

- Albertans want access to a family doctor who is connected to a team. How will your party ensure every Albertan has a medical home?
- How will your party work to encourage medical students and residents to choose comprehensive family medicine in Alberta?
- How will your party financially stabilize and sustain the independent, small-business family practice offices that deliver the majority of primary care, including recognizing the increasing administrative requirements that are burdening them?