

Strengthening child and youth mental health and mental healthcare

If elected, what will your party do to improve access to publicly funded mental health treatment and resources for children and youth?

Making mental healthcare more accessible to the people of our province is a top priority.

The Education Action Plan has student mental health and wellness as one of the nine key top priority areas. The Department of Education has released the findings of the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children study to support schools in responding to student mental health needs.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has established a secretariat within Executive Council for a period of five years with evaluation to occur after three years. The roles of the secretariat include:

- a) Implementation of the Comprehensive School Health Framework;
- b) Development of a year-round provincial child health services model within one department;
- c) Promoting 'health in all policies and practices in our schools' among all youth serving departments;
- d) Renewing a commitment to the Model of Coordination for Services to Children and Youth for children with complex needs; and
- e) Monitoring the recommendations relevant to schools in the Towards Recovery report.

Health and Community Services has also conducted and concluded a thorough review of the waiting lists for all child/youth related mental health services at each RHA and the Child Development waiting list at the Janeway Child Health Centre.

Other recommendations are underway and nearing completion. Guidance counsellors are now able to deliver school-based proactive mental health services because of the reduction of the number of assessments they must conduct, reducing their involvement in special education management and limiting guidance counsellors' role with testing to cognitive ability instruments only. This enables them to focus on their area of expertise.

By 2022, all teacher education programs will include comprehensive school health, there will be an early identification system to include markers for attendance, mental health and addictions, as well as early signs of youth homelessness. As well, the Department of Education will embed specific learning outcomes for student mental health and addictions in all curriculum as it is renewed, including and reinforcing it across all subject areas.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador under the direction of Premier Furey and the Minister of Education realized the extenuating circumstances of this school year and the increased needs for mental health supports in our schools. We have offered considerable extra support to the education system during the pandemic in anticipation of possible issues with students surrounding protocols and their ability to cope. We have added an additional 25

guidance counsellors and allocated an additional \$600,000 towards increasing teacher learning assistants.

New curriculum has been developed to include social and emotional learning. Students will learn skills for problem solving, decision making and getting along with others. The Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy which is being implemented in all k-6 schools this year, focuses on the development of social-emotional learning. The government is currently developing a plan for extending the policy into Grades 7-12.

Bridge the gApp, originally developed by staff at Eastern Health and later expanded in scope by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, adds to the services in place for young people to access help. The Furey Government will support the ongoing research and continued development of this essential online resource that was originally developed for youth, but has expanded to include adults as well.

The Liberal Government has already made great headway in addressing mental health and addictions issues in our province. Under Premier Furey, we will continue the on-going collaborative approach to mental health and wellness.

Creating safe and healthy environments

If elected, what will your party do to ensure safer and healthier homes, schools and communities for children and youth in NL, including reducing rates of childhood poverty and food insecurity?

Our Liberal Government is working hard to increase our food self-sufficiency from 10% to 20% by 2022. We are currently at 14.8% in fruit and vegetable self-sufficiency.

We are producing new vegetable transplants at the Centre for Forestry and Agriculture. We are conducting innovative research on a variety of crops. We are working with our beef farmers to produce more local product. Transporting food to the island and to rural and remote communities is expensive, so food self sufficiency will grow food security in our province.

In collaboration with industry and academia, we have established a two year co-op agriculture technician program at the College of the North Atlantic that's designed to help us meet our food self-sufficiency goals while also protecting the environment.

In response to Snowmageddon and COVID-19, we established a Food Security Working Group co-chaired by government and Food First NL. Food First NL is partnering with communities throughout NL on food security initiatives, and we are happy to support their great work of growing food close to home recognizing the cost to transport food to the island and to rural, remote and isolated communities impacts the cost of food.

Since 2018, our government has invested over \$250,000 to establish and support over 150 community gardens throughout the province and we intend to expand that highly popular program even more in the years ahead.

We provided over \$575,000 at the beginning of the lockdown to get food to people who were unable to access food, and we expanded our 811 line in partnership with Food First, the Jimmy Pratt Foundation, SeniorsNL and the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for the Deaf to connect people with food resources.

Our Liberal Government provides over \$1M annually to the Kids Eat Smart Foundation and over \$100,000 to the School Lunch Association.

Our Liberal Government is committed to a renewed 10-year poverty reduction strategy in consultation with community-partners to improve approaches to current realities. Fundamental to reducing and preventing poverty is understanding and addressing barriers to employment and other community engagement. We are committed to spending smarter and rethinking systems to ensure they work for the people they are designed to help. Premier Furey has also established a Task Force on Health Care to reimagine the health care system and focus on the social determinants of health, which is imperative in renewing our province's approach to poverty reduction.