The Role of the Manitoba Government in Health Care

Report Card 2016

This report card reflects current performance but is a living document. When the Manitoba government’s performance in an area changes, we will alter that area’s spotlight in future reports.
From coast to coast to coast, everyone living in Canada should be able to wake up every morning confident that, if necessary, they can access the same high level of health care as their peers in other parts of the country. As guided by the Canada Health Act, provinces and territories are responsible for delivering health care services, with the mandate to ensure equitable care across the country. However, needs, demographics, and resource availability vary across Canada.

It is up to provincial and territorial governments to provide their communities with accessible care that is comprehensive, proactive, and timely.

The Government of Manitoba must ensure that its health care system has continuous support, strategic direction, and a commitment to improvement that go beyond just meeting the needs of Manitobans. The government has a responsibility to:

- Establish provincial standards of care
- Create provincial programs that meet the diverse needs of Manitobans
- Provide adequate funding to programs and providers who develop and deliver our care

As the provincial voice for family medicine in Manitoba, the Manitoba College of Family Physicians (MCFP) strives to ensure that the government delivers on its responsibility to maintain a strong health care system for Manitobans. This report card provides voters in Manitoba with an assessment of the current provincial government’s performance in health care, and evaluates the policy platforms of the various provincial parties released in advance of the election.

The document focuses on five areas of crucial importance to Manitobans’ health.

**These indicators are:**

1. A Family Doctor for Every Manitoban
2. Mental Health and Addiction
3. Indigenous Health
4. Rural and Remote Care
5. Support for the Patient’s Medical Home (PMH)

The report card is divided into two sections:

- An evaluation of the current government’s progress in these five areas
- An evaluation of the health care platforms of the three largest political parties contesting this election—the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party, and the Progressive Conservative Party—and what the election of each would mean for health care in Manitoba

“Spotlights” are used to grade the performance of the current/prospective government:

- **GREEN**
  - A green grade shows that the current/prospective government demonstrates strong leadership; we encourage an ongoing commitment in these areas.

- **YELLOW**
  - A yellow grade shows that the current/prospective government is somewhat involved, but could do even more. It could also indicate a high-level commitment to an area that lacks implementation details.

- **RED**
  - A red grade indicates that the current/prospective government has shown no involvement. These red areas need attention now. A red grade is a call to action!

In 2016, here is how the Manitoba government is performing in these five key areas...
Current Government Performance

Here is how the government is performing in the following five areas of health care:

1. A Family Doctor for Every Manitoban

The government created a family doctor plan, with a goal that by 2015 every Manitoban would have “access to a Family Doctor and Primary Care Team.” Manitoba has taken several steps to support both the 2015 goal and the longer-term vision of how family doctors practise. Registering with the Family Doctor Finder program helps Manitobans connect with a primary care provider. To date, 95% of Manitobans without a family physician who registered for the program have been matched with a doctor.

2. Mental Health and Addiction

In 2011, Manitoba launched Rising to the Challenge, a 5-year mental health and well-being strategic plan. The strategy has supported initiatives such as eating disorder programs, establishing a Mental Health Court, and youth suicide prevention. Manitoba’s Framework for Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias was also created. However, the MCFP and the CFPC would like to see additional progress made in mental health initiatives related to substance abuse, Indigenous populations, and rural and remote care.

3. Indigenous Health

Although the government has supported a number of programs that focus on clinical services and health promotion initiatives, the MCFP would like to see the government also tackle Indigenous health in rural communities, and address physical and mental health disparities that continue to exist.

4. Rural and Remote Care

Currently, Manitoba supports physician recruitment and retention through initiatives such as return-of-service grants, the Office of Rural and Northern Health, and efforts of the Physician Recruitment Coordination Office. However, the MCFP and the CFPC believe greater support is required for communities that are struggling to recruit physicians to service their health care needs. More effective support will lead to greater results in addressing this issue.

5. Support for the Patient’s Medical Home

The CFPC’s Patient’s Medical Home serves as a central hub for accessible and compassionate patient-centred care; as a foundation for ongoing practice-based research; and as an inspiration for physicians of the future through hands-on training.

The government has committed to providing different types of services and initiatives that support the goals of the PMH. One key step is the introduction of My Health Teams, an innovative way to provide primary care services across Manitoba. Some other actions include expanding same-day and next-day appointments, expanding the use of TeleCARE, promoting the use of electronic medical records, and supporting collaborative interprofessional care.
Election Platforms

We contacted the three largest provincial parties with a brief questionnaire asking for feedback regarding what their plans are to address our health indicators.

This section reflects our evaluation of the responses we received.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Liberal Party</th>
<th>New Democratic Party</th>
<th>Progressive Conservative Party</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Family Doctor for Every Manitoban</td>
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<td>YELLOW</td>
<td>GREEN</td>
<td>YELLOW</td>
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</tbody>
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The party demonstrates leadership on the subject. There is commitment to a specific and actionable plan.

The party shows a level of involvement or commitment. However, there is an opportunity to do more and/or there are no specifics on planned actions.

The party shows no involvement and does not plan or there appears to be no plan to address the indicator.

**A Family Doctor for Every Manitoban**

**Liberal Party**
The Liberal Party plans to continue support for the training and development of family physicians in Manitoba, but acknowledges that more needs to be done to address underserviced areas. Recommendations include providing greater incentives for physicians to either work in rural areas or spend part of their week there. The Liberals state that a focus on prevention, home-care, and improved access to psychological/psychiatric services will reduce the demand on hospital resources, starting with emergency services.

**Grade:** GREEN

**New Democratic Party**
The NDP is committed to increasing family physician access for every Manitoban. The NDP plans to continue connecting family physicians and patients through its Family Doctor Finder program, which to date has connected 95% of the program applicants to a family physician. The plan also includes training and hiring more physicians, and increasing medical residency training positions.

**Grade:** GREEN

**Progressive Conservative Party**
The Progressive Conservative Party emphasizes the importance of every Canadian having a family physician. It aims to increase access to family physicians by establishing a physician recruitment and retention program, in partnership with the medical community, to attract and retain physicians and other needed medical professionals.

**Grade:** YELLOW
Mental Health and Addiction

Liberal Party
Improving access to psychological and psychiatric services is a major priority for the Liberal Party. The party plans to make these services available to all by covering them under Medicare. This investment is designed to improve outcomes for patients with mental health issues, and take pressure off hospitals and emergency rooms. The Liberals also promise to increase funding available for applied behavioural analyses for children with autism by $3 million, and recognize that choice regarding other programs must be considered, as well.

Grade: GREEN

New Democratic Party
The NDP has launched initiatives to address mental health and addiction, including the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (which also has a northern mobile crisis unit to help those in remote areas); a navigational tool for youth mental health services called StressHacks.ca; affordable and community housing; and addiction services and treatments. The party pledges to provide training for social workers and foster parents, and invest in youth-led after-school programs in northern and remote Indigenous communities. Although some of these programs are seeing results, the MCFP believes more needs to be done to address all groups affected by mental health issues in Manitoba.

Grade: YELLOW

Progressive Conservative Party
The Progressive Conservative Party is focused on preventive health programs and improving the well-being of those who suffer from mental illness. The party acknowledges that to effectively face these challenges, collaborative work at the community level and with health care providers is needed.

Grade: YELLOW

Indigenous Health

Liberal Party
The Liberals plan to create a food subsidy program for northern communities to encourage healthy eating. Nutrition counselling will also be offered to Indigenous communities to educate families on how to prepare healthy food. An annual fund of $15 million will also be created to improve housing.

Grade: GREEN

New Democratic Party
The NDP states that to address health inequalities, the government must work with the Indigenous community to create solutions. The NDP intends to support First Nations-led engagement and consultations on health to direct the development of a new approach. The party is also open to creating a new First Nations health entity that would be rooted in reconciliation and self-determination.

Grade: YELLOW

Progressive Conservative Party
The Progressive Conservatives would like to work with the Indigenous community and federal partners to identify gaps in health care, and work proactively to create better health education and more effective quality care. The party stresses the importance of tackling health issues such as diabetes that disproportionately affect the Indigenous population.

Grade: YELLOW
Rural and Remote Care

**Liberal Party**
The Liberal Party will consult on a regional approach to health services in rural Manitoba, with a focus on “clusters” that allow for increased availability of services and improved ambulance service. A greater effort will be made to encourage physicians to practise in under-serviced rural areas. An emphasis was also placed on using information technology and e-health to increase access to health information for patients in remote areas.

*Grade: YELLOW*

**New Democratic Party**
The NDP created a Rural Physician Recruitment Advisory Committee in partnership with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to work toward supporting community needs. The party has made numerous investments to increase recruitment in underserviced areas, including:

- Increasing rural residency positions for new doctors
- Providing financial assistance to medical students/residents for a minimum return-of-service in a rural or remote community through the Northern/Remote Family Medicine Residency Program and the Medical Student Financial Assistance Program
- Supporting incentive programs, such as the Physician Resettlement Fund and Physician Relief Fund, that target physicians and supporting health team members

Despite these efforts, the financial incentives being offered are not translating into a meaningful result. The MCFP recommends more comprehensive solutions be created to ensure these initiatives are effective in the long-term.

*Grade: YELLOW*

**Progressive Conservative Party**
The Progressive Conservatives plan to establish a physician recruitment and retention program for Winnipeg and rural communities to increase the number of physicians in communities in need.

*Grade: YELLOW*

Support for the Patient’s Medical Home

**Liberal Party**
The Liberals support the practice of coordinated, comprehensive primary patient care—with a focus on prevention. The party wants to build on the progress that doctors and health care professionals have already made in developing this concept, and would like to further improve information systems and technology.

*Grade: YELLOW*

**New Democratic Party**
The NDP supports the principles of the PMH, including having a patient-centred approach, improving coordination within the health system, and utilizing interprofessional teams. The NDP will continue to invest in initiatives such as My Health Teams, Family Doctor Finder, the Advanced Access program, primary care networks, and Quick Care Clinics. The party also plans to introduce an initiative to support the incorporation of interprofessional primary care teams in independent fee-for-service practices.

*Grade: GREEN*

**Progressive Conservative Party**
The Progressive Conservatives support the concept of patient-centred medical home care, and believe the best results are achieved when the health care team works collaboratively with the patient and their family. The party will work toward shorter emergency room wait times and lower ambulance fees, and to accelerate the construction of personal care home facilities.

*Grade: YELLOW*