



Ontario Peer Development Initiative
Initiative ontarienne de développement favorisant l'aide entre pairs
Supporting Consumer/Survivor Initiatives Throughout Ontario
À l'appui de initiatives des usages survivants à travers l'Ontario

ONTARIO VOTES 2022

SUMMARY OF PARTY PLATFORMS: MH&A COMMITMENTS

Ontario's election day is June 2nd and fast approaching! While current polling suggests it will be another majority mandate for Doug Ford's PC Party, history has shown that anything can happen in the last few weeks of a campaign.

OPDI is sharing this summary and analysis of mental health & addictions related commitments that each of the main provincial political parties (PCs, Liberals and NDP) have included as part of their election platforms.

It should also be recognized that the ideas outlined by the opposition parties could find their way into a new PC mandate depending on the level of support these commitments receive from stakeholders like the OPDI and its members. In the event of a minority government, these commitments may actually act as bargaining chips in party-by-party negotiations to support the sitting government. Regardless of the outcome of the election, it is important to understand the general public discourse on MH&A policy, as it may help guide stakeholders as Ontario's healthcare system continues to evolve over the coming years.

As the OPDI has done in the past, we encourage our members to engage locally with their election candidates to raise profile for our segment of Ontario's healthcare framework, and to converse with them directly on their party's approach.

Summary / Analysis

The mental health & addiction (MH&A) commitments from each party are among the most featured elements within each respective election platform.

MH&A issues are again one of the most important policy debates in this election (and directly linked to other key policy priorities like living affordability, healthcare, and housing), and no political party has ignored their responsibility to it. Despite this commonality, the differences in each party's approach are fairly profound, and merits review by stakeholders in the space.

The PC party is running on their unpassed 2022 Budget document that was tabled just before the election was called. Unsurprisingly, the PCs are running on their record and their previous commitment to the "Roadmap to Wellness" plan that was tabled halfway through Ford's first term in government. This strategy document is [available online](#). When it was first launched, the roadmap was backed by a \$3.8 billion commitment (over 10-years) to "*ensure Ontario can provide a clear path forward to offer people easier access to higher-quality care in communities across the province.*"

The PC party in their 2022 Budget / campaign platform document announced \$204M in additional resources for the implementation of the strategy. The only further detail provided in terms of where the additional funding would be allocated was contained in the following sentence: "*these investments are filling critical gaps and enhancing services in a range of areas, including online cognitive behavioural therapy support, child and youth mental health, addictions services, supportive housing, mental health, justice and Indigenous mental health and addictions.*"

Unlike the other party platforms, the PC document goes to some lengths to address mental health services for front-line first responders and public safety personnel (police and courtroom workers). The new funding being made available by the PCs for this would be approximately \$50M.

The Liberal platform, which differentiates itself generally from the NDP document by being "fully costed," focuses on wait times, infrastructure, youth, and opioid addiction. On the wait times issue, the Liberal focuses on commitments around health human resources. The platform commits to investing considerably towards front-line professionals to help address backlogs for psychiatric and psychological services. The additional staff commitment would also include 1,000 more mental health workers for elementary schools. Interestingly "lived-experience" was included in the Liberal document for youth and elementary schools, and is the only reference in any of the three platforms. In terms of infrastructure investments, the

Liberals have committed to redeveloping and expanding both CAMH and the Peterborough Regional Health Centre (mental health and cancer services).

Finally, on the opioid crisis, the Liberal approach would include a \$300M investment that targets organized crime (manufacturers), while expanding harm-reduction initiatives such as safe consumption and injection sites. While the NDP addresses the opioid crisis as well, their platform does not include a dollar figure investment. It does, however, go one step further than the Liberals in that they would decriminalize personal drug use, and would declare it a public health emergency.

The NDP's MH&A centerpiece commitment is to bring mental health services under OHIP. In media interviews, the NDP leader Andrea Horwath has stated that people need to be able to use their OHIP card for mental health, not their credit card. In terms of addressing youth access to MH&A services, the NDP plans to spend \$130M to increase resources that would deliver a 30-day maximum waitlist. Health human resources was not touched on (whereas the Liberals made this their core commitment), but the NDP did address infrastructure needs by committing to an 8% budget increase for agencies and hospitals to increase bed capacity, and building more supportive housing.

Depending on your own experiences and interpretation of the problems with the current MH&A system, stakeholders now have three different approaches articulated by the three main parties. The specific commitments are listed below for reference.

ONTARIO PC PARTY

2022 Budget / Platform Commitments for MH&A

COVID-19 has impacted the mental health of people of Ontario from all walks of life and underscores the need for a long-term plan to respond to the pandemic. Now more than ever, it is critical to provide mental health supports to those who need it most. A strong mental health system can also help prevent those struggling with their mental health from reaching a crisis point and helps ensure patients can access support when and where they need it.

This is why the government is investing an additional **\$204 million to build on investments and achievements to date**, and to continue to move forward with expanding existing services, implementing innovative solutions and improving access to mental health and addiction services. This investment builds on the 2020 Roadmap to Wellness, a provincial strategy to address long-standing mental health and addictions needs, with a historic investment of \$3.8 billion over 10 years.

These investments are filling critical gaps and enhancing services in a range of areas, including online cognitive behavioural therapy support, child and youth mental health, addictions services, supportive housing, mental health, justice and Indigenous mental health and addictions.

ONTARIO LIBERAL PARTY

Platform Commitments for MH&A

Highlights

- Reverse the Ford Conservatives' cuts to mental health and addiction services, and invest an additional \$3 billion;
- Reduce wait times for mental health care – Train 3,000 new mental health and addictions professionals, social workers, psychologists and psychotherapists, ensuring they reflect Ontario's diversity and are culturally-competent – particularly for Indigenous, racially diverse and French-language communities;
- Hire 1,000 mental health professionals for children to eliminate wait times;
- Provide free 'mental health first aid' and guided online supports;
- Have mental health professionals in emergency rooms and ready to respond to emergency calls;
- Guarantee access to mental health services for all health professionals;
- Require private employer benefits to include mental health services coverage in our new portable benefits plan;
- Build 15,000 more supportive homes over the next 10 years -- providing safe environments and access to counselling for those struggling with mental health and addictions; and
- Measure and publicly track the performance of our mental health system, including wait times and emergency visits.

Psychiatric Hospitals

- Redevelop Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; and
- Expand Peterborough Regional Health Centre's mental health and cancer services.

Elementary and Secondary School Students

- Ensure no student waits for critical mental health help;
- Hire 1,000 more mental health workers for students and staff;
- Make mental health first aid training more available to staff;
- Give a free breakfast to every elementary student who needs one;
- Focus especially on culturally-competent services that understand and affirm all kinds of lived experiences;
- Make mental health first aid training available for all education workers; and
- Grade 13 will offer new credits in mental health and resilience.

Post-Secondary Students

- Help colleges and universities create safe, inclusive campuses; and
- Support campus mental health and gender-based violence prevention

Justice System

- Divert people with addictions, disabilities and mental health conditions away from the justice system and to appropriate supports;
- Ensure police training includes de-escalation, anti-racism, cultural sensitivity and mental health; and
- Help mental health workers be more ready to respond to low-risk emergency calls to identify and divert people with addictions and disabilities from the justice system, directing them to more appropriate services. This will be achieved by investing in mental health first responders and the OPP Crisis Call Diversion Program, as well as providing greater access to social workers for those leaving correctional facilities.

Indigenous

- Invest in Indigenous-led mental health supports and long-term care.

Social, supportive and community housing services

Provide municipal and non-profit partners with \$360 million annually to operate and improve social, supportive and community housing services – funding that will increase as 38,000 new homes are completed.

Opioid Crisis

- Prevent, intervene and treat opioid addiction and overdose with a \$300 million investment;
- Target organized crime groups and deceptive opioid manufacturers;
- Make life-saving harm reduction supplies and sites more available (i.e., naloxone kits, fentanyl testing strips and harm reduction supplies at pharmacies, community spaces and with first responders);
- Lift the arbitrary cap on new Consumption and Treatment Services sites, which includes safe injection programs, approving applications from unserved communities, like those in rural and Northern Ontario, and those offering culturally-competent programs for diverse and Indigenous communities. Support the 24/7 operation of these sites in key locations and provide additional support to safely reduce needle debris. The Opioid Emergency Task Force will be reactivated – which didn't meet once during the Ford Conservatives' four years in office – and better research the opioid crisis' impact on different communities, as well as new harm reduction and pain management approaches.

NDP

Platform Commitments for MH&A

Universal, Publicly Funded Mental Health Care – expanded access to counselling and therapy services across the province by bringing therapy services into OHIP.

Creating “Mental Health Ontario” – a new coordinating organization that will take the lead on identifying and publicly reporting on mental health needs, developing a comprehensive wait list for services, bringing in province-wide mental health standards, creating a basket of services, and making sure that mental health and addiction programs are delivered comprehensively across Ontario.

Reduce Children’s Mental Health Waitlist to 30 Days – implementation of the Make Kids Count Action Plan as laid out by the Children’s Health

Coalition. The plan would include an investment of \$130M over the next three years to build intensive treatment and specialized consultation services, increase access to psychotherapy and counselling, family therapy and supports, and scale 24-hour crisis support services.

Supportive Housing – the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council recommended that 30,000 new supportive housing units be built over 10 years for people living with mental health and addiction challenges.

8% Funding Boost for Front Line Mental Health Care Workers – the funding increase will be given to mental health and addiction agencies, as well as hospitals, to increase the number of Tier 5 treatment beds for people with complex needs.

Improving Crisis Response – an immediate investment of \$10M more into mobile crisis services and \$7M more for safe bed programs to support mobile crisis teams. Work towards establishing 24-hour civilian community mobile crisis teams across the province to operate in partnership with Mobile Crisis Response Teams and respond to low-risk crisis situations.

Overdose and Other Addictions / Opioid Crisis – will declare the opioid crisis a public health emergency, and invest in addiction rehabilitation, detox centres, and harm reduction strategies. Will remove the cap that Doug Ford put in place on supervised consumption sites, expedite approvals for supervised consumption sites in the north, and work to ensure safer alternatives to the current toxic and deadly supply of drugs available. Will reduce stigma of drug addiction and will decriminalize personal drug use.