



New Democrats

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Cheryl Koehn
Arthritis Consumer Experts
#210-1529 West 6th Avenue
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Dear Cheryl Koehn:

Thank you for your important questions regarding arthritis care in Saskatchewan. On behalf of Saskatchewan's New Democrats, I am pleased to offer the following responses to your questions.

What will your government do to bring a high quality, accessible, standardized evidence-based model of arthritis care for all Saskatchewan residents?

Saskatchewan New Democrats know that, unfortunately, the quality of care Saskatchewan people receive depends on where they live. We also know that access to physician and primary care is a real challenge for people living in rural, remote and Northern communities. That's why our plan includes a health workforce strategy to identify and fill gaps in health services and \$100 million to add more doctors and more health professionals to communities across the province.

What will your government do to ensure the continuation, improvement, and expansion of virtual care for all Saskatchewan residents – both patients and health care professionals?

New Democrats are committed to expanding opportunities to improve care through virtual options for both patients and health care professionals in our public health care system.

What will your government do to improve the Province's ranking on the ACE Report Card?

New Democrats would continue to put pressure on the federal government to introduce a national pharmacare program so that Saskatchewan people could benefit from expanded access to and coverage for medications for arthritis and other chronic conditions.

What will your government do to improve the uptake of biosimilars and will you commit to reinvest those savings to support additional medication listings and improve patient coverage?

New Democrats would encourage the federal government to examine the benefits from the uptake of biosimilars as part of a national pharmacare program.

What will your government do to improve the healthcare and lives of Indigenous peoples living with arthritis in Saskatchewan?

We would work towards implementing all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in the provincial jurisdiction and work with our federal counterparts to eliminate disparities in access to health care and health outcomes between Saskatchewan people living on and off-reserve.

Will your government take steps to ensure timely, specialized care for Saskatchewan patients with arthritis, including joint surgery wait times that are within medically recommended guidelines? How will your government manage the backlog of surgical appointments that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

We are concerned to see that, as a result of the surgery cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, wait times for joint replacements have grown significantly. That is why Saskatchewan New Democrats have committed \$100 million to additional staffing for the Saskatchewan Health Authority to build capacity within our public health system so people can have their procedures done more safely and sooner. We have also committed to building a surgical centre in Regina area, which would add additional surgical theatres to our existing system and help clear the surgical backlog more quickly.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention, we will work hard to see these issues addressed. Please also accept my best wishes for your health and safety during the challenging times our province is facing with COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Mitchell Bonokoski
Director of Research and Policy