

Arthritis Consumer Experts Survey

1. Arthritis affects more than 2 million Ontario residents, yet no standardized model of arthritis care is available. This is particularly pronounced outside of the GTA. Where you live can be more important in determining treatment than how sick or disabled you are.
What will your government do to bring a high quality, standardized evidence-based model of arthritis care for all Ontario residents?

The Green Party of Ontario believes quality health care is a basic right that should be available to all. We recognize that location can unfortunately determine the quality of care received, as rural areas are not as well-equipped or well-staffed to care for more complex issues. To increase options for rural health care, especially in those that lack primary care options, we want to empower Nurse Practitioners as primary health care providers. Additionally, we will increase funding for telemedicine, providing care from a distance. We will establish a full list of core services, including specialized health services, that ensure their availability within every Local Health Integration Network. Even with these initiatives, we know that transportation to other health care facilities is sometimes required; we will support special public transit services for cases when local health care is not sufficient.

2. A 2016 study predicts that by 2031, OA will cost the Canadian economy an estimated \$17.5 billion a year in lost productivity. Osteoarthritis forces people to stop working or work less due to pain, fatigue, and the demands of prescribed treatment therapies. The work time loss is significant because of the reducing number of workers available to replace retiring baby boomers after decades of low birth rates.
What will your government do to introduce patient education and exercise programs, such as GLA:D, that have been proven to significantly reduce hip or knee osteoarthritis symptoms?

To ensure that patients are offered the most effective treatment plans, we want to create an integrated funding structure for health care. This structure will be based on quality outcomes that will ensure that the best care is provided by the most appropriate provider. Also, by increasing the number of nurse practitioners in all health care facilities, we believe that patient care and outcomes can be improved.

3. The new Ontario government must take steps to ensure the sustainability of prescription drug plans and the continued affordability of prescription drugs for Ontario residents. Biosimilars represent a potential source of significant cost savings to the health care system.
What will your government do to improve the uptake of biosimilars and increase accessibility to life saving medications and reduce out-of-pocket costs for Ontario residents living with inflammatory arthritis?

For many health issues, including arthritis, pharmaceuticals are equally important to treatment as physical therapy. The Green Party of Ontario strives to make pharamacare universally accessible.

We continue to push for a federally-funded Pharmacare program but will extend a provincially-funded equivalent if a federal program is not supported. Through this program, Ontarians will be provided with access to needed medication, not contingent on support from the federal government.

4. Aboriginal Canadians have some of the highest rates of serious or life-threatening arthritis in the world, and are at greater risk for becoming disabled by arthritis. Significant gaps in Aboriginal arthritis care currently exist in Ontario.

What will your government do to improve the healthcare and lives of Aboriginals living with arthritis in Ontario?

The Green Party of Ontario acknowledges the unique challenges that Indigenous people face, especially in health care. To provide them with quality health care in their communities, we will expand access to multiservice and integrated primary care models, such as Indigenous health access centers. We will increase the number of Indigenous health care and education professionals and support their retention within Indigenous communities. Health care is a collaborative effort, and we will also work with Political Territorial Organizations, Tribal Councils, and reserves and to Local Health Integration Networks to increase availability of health services for both on-reserve and urban Indigenous populations. When on-reserve care is not possible, special public transport ensures they still have access to health care. Further, we will establish cultural competency training requirements on Indigenous issues for public-facing professionals and improve availability of supports and services to include Indigenous languages. These are ongoing efforts that we will continue to prioritize to ensure that all First Nations have access to the same health care services offered to all Ontarians.

5. Arthritis is the leading cause of disability and work disability in Ontario. About a quarter of the population with arthritis between 20 and 54 years of age in Ontario were not in the labour force because of their arthritis.

How will your government establish better prevention programs and facilitate flexible work arrangements to help reduce the direct and indirect costs of arthritis to Ontario employers and the Ontario economy?

Our vision to support health care includes committing to comprehensive primary health care as the foundation of the health system so that every person in Ontario has timely access to a primary health care provider. We want to ensure that health promotion, illness prevention and community well-being are at the centre of our health system. Additionally, to provide every person security in times of transition, we will provide a benefit rate at 100% of the low Income Measure as a Basic Income Guarantee for all Ontarians. We will also immediately Ontario Disability Support Payment towards rates that match the low income measure as well as asset limits for these recipients.

6. The economic burden of arthritis is expected to double within a generation and strain the Ontario's health system's ability to provide quality care to Ontario patients with arthritis. **Will your government take steps to increase the number of rheumatologists and arthritis trained allied health professionals to ensure timely, specialized care for Ontario patients with arthritis?**

Yes, the Green Party of Ontario will work to ensure that appropriate health professionals are available and accessible for Ontario patients living with arthritis. We prioritize our health care investments in frontline services (rather than administration) and will ensure that all care providers are working at the full scope of practice.