



Andrea Horwath

Leader, Ontario New Democrats

www.OntarioNDP.com

Caroline Stone,

Chair, Board of Directors

Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services

150 Kilgour Rd.
Toronto, ON M4G 1R8

October 3, 2011

Dear Ms. Stone,

Ontario's New Democrats agree that we need to reduce waitlists and provide better access to rehabilitation services for children with disabilities in Ontario.

Our health care platform focuses on improving and expanding access to healthcare services – in the home and through community supports. We will free up the funds necessary to increase access to rehabilitation services by making more efficient use of healthcare resources. That means keeping people out of hospital where at all possible. We will do this by helping Ontarians to stay in their homes as long as possible by eliminating the waiting list for home care and by eliminating the waiting list for long-term care for those with complex needs. We'll also take pressure off emergency rooms by improving access to primary care through 50 new family health care clinics and adding 200 doctors in underserved communities.

Using money efficiently also means making sure that as many dollars as possible go to front line care. That's why we'll cap CEO compensation at twice the Premier's salary and save a further \$600 million by cutting back on high-paid consultants. Finally, we'll invest in health promotion to keep people healthy in the first place. All of this will help free up funds to better support the rehabilitation of children in Ontario.

We believe strongly that early learning programs should be accessible to all children, regardless of their ability or special needs. We are committed to making this a reality. We also believe that it is unacceptable that over 30,000 elementary schools students in Ontario are stuck waiting for the special needs services that they require. 27 of the province's 32 school boards are forced to raid other school budgets – for repairs and classroom materials – in order to try to meet the demand for special needs services in their schools. The outdated funding formula is simply not providing sufficient funding to meet students' needs. We will review the funding formula to ensure that it properly serves students with special needs. We will also work to develop a method to regularly evaluate the quality of special education services.

Our plan for ensuring primary care for all Ontarians is inclusive of those with physical disabilities. We will work with Family Health Teams, Community Health Centres, Nurse-Practitioner Led clinics, and other primary care providers to ensure that they have the ability to serve all Ontarians.

We recognize that there are significant costs associated with raising a child with a disability. New Democrats are dedicated to ensuring that medically necessary medication and therapies are available to those in need. We are





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committed to working with the federal New Democrat team to launch a national pharmacare plan. We will also work to ensure accessibility, reliability, and compassion in our provincial drug plans. We will continue to work to find ways to expand financial support for families who are struggling financially and have trouble paying for the costs of medications and treatments, by working to enhance and improve access to the Ontario Drug Program and Trillium-supported medications.

We will also fight for improved income support programs for people with disabilities and their families. We are committed to following through promptly on recommendations arising out of the Review of Social Assistance next year to improve income adequacy of programs and to provide individualized support to return to work. In the interim, we will increase social assistance rates to ensure they keep up with inflation. We will also end the clawback on the first \$300/month of ODSP recipient earnings during the first year of employment, and will increase the monthly work-related benefit to \$150.

Finally, we recognize that improvements need to be made to better the continuity of services and supports for people with disabilities from childhood to adulthood. We will address this issue in consultation with stakeholders.

A central focus of Ontario's NDP over the course of its fifty years has been fairness. This has involved standing up for individuals and groups who have traditionally been excluded from political decision-making: women, people of colour, people living in poverty, and people with disabilities. Another such group is children. Politicians make decisions each day that impact on the future of young people – too often without input from young people themselves. We are committed to working to find ways to better solicit and hear the voice of children at Queen's Park to ensure that all decisions reflect the needs and interests of young people in this province.

We look forward to working with you on this challenging yet important task.

Thank you for all your efforts to bring the concerns of children with disabilities to our attention.

Sincerely,

Andrea Horwath

Leader, Ontario's New Democrats

