

Vision. Change. Progress.

McFADYEN 2011

October 1, 2011

Jan Legeros, Executive Director
Long-Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba
103-1483 Pembina Highway
Winnipeg MB R3T 2C6

Dear Ms Legeros:

Thank you for your letter concerning long-term and continuing care in Manitoba.

Health care is a priority for the Manitoba Progressive Conservatives and with the growing number of seniors in our communities we must ensure that care is available to them when they need it. The number of Manitobans over the age of 75 is expected to nearly double by 2036, yet the NDP have failed to plan for the needs of Manitobans. Several hundred Manitobans are waiting for placement in a personal care home. Manitobans continue to be without an adequate long-term care program.

The number of personal care home beds in Manitoba has remained stagnant under Greg Selinger's NDP. From 1999 to 2010 the NDP only opened 385 personal care home beds, well under the demand of our growing senior population. A Progressive Conservative government will grow the number of long-term care beds in this province to address the significant demand.

Hundreds of Manitobans utilize palliative care and respite care services each and every year. The importance of caregivers cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, demand for these services far exceeds supply. Many palliative care patients occupy medical beds meant for acute illnesses or conditions. A Progressive Conservative government would build 40 new palliative care beds to address the significant need.

Approximately 40,000 Manitobans use home care services every year. Home care reduces the demand for long term beds by providing a viable choice for aging Manitobans to maintain their independence and dignity in their own homes and communities. Home care also helps support family caregivers. Unfortunately, demand for services is far exceeding supply and as a result, home care services in Manitoba are strained.

During this campaign the NDP made a desperate promise to improve home care. However, documents from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority reveal that implementation of full-time home care has been paused and hiring of home care attendants has been suspended. The reality is that home care clients have been telling us for weeks that the NDP have cut back their services. Greg Selinger and the NDP have had 12 years to plan for the needs of Manitobans, yet we continue to be without an adequate home care program.

Wait times in this province have also become a significant source of frustration for Manitobans. Whether it's waiting to see a doctor, sitting for hours in an emergency department or waiting to

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be placed in a personal care home – Manitobans have suffered for too long under this current government.

A Progressive Conservative government we will ensure that health care is available to Manitobans when they need it most by adding at least 1,700 nurses, 250 doctors, 75 nurse practitioners, 40 physician assistants and 25 mental health workers and addictions counselors over the next six years to the front lines of our health care system.

The NDP failed on their promise to end hallway medicine, and there are still seniors in the hallways of emergency rooms. A Progressive Conservative government will introduce Geriatric Emergency Management nurses at the Grace Hospital and the Concordia Hospital. These specialized nurse clinicians will be able to conduct comprehensive geriatric assessments, assist emergency staff with admission decisions, arrange for appropriate supports in the community and educate staff, patients and caregivers about geriatric issues. This will reduce wait times and improve care for seniors when they visit the emergency department.

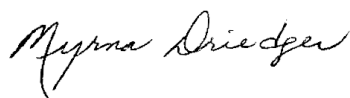
The health care system is complex and can be confusing to navigate. Currently, information about health care services and wait times is not available in one centralized location. This is a leading cause of frustration for seniors and caregivers. We are going to address this problem by launching a Manitoba Patient Advocate website and a new senior's health care hotline which will make patient information accessible and straightforward, and provide health care specific information for seniors.

Manitoba's drug benefit formulary has not been updated in months, which is yet another frustration of Manitobans. A Progressive Conservative government would ensure that the Manitoba Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee meets regularly to ensure that the provincial government receives recommendations regarding additions to the Manitoba drug formulary.

Greg Selinger and the NDP have received a failing grade from the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba. Over 19,000 Manitobans live with the disease or some other form of dementia. That number is expected to double by 2038, which will bring new demands to the health care system. A Progressive Conservative government will fund First Link, ® which will connect individuals and their families to the Alzheimer Society's programs and services and other community health services. We will also re-establish the Memory Assessment Clinic, which was closed by the NDP in 2002.

We look forward to working with you if Manitobans give us the privilege of forming government on October 4.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Myrna Driedger".

Myrna Driedger
Progressive Conservative Health Critic