

Liberal Party of Canada

Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH)

1. Does your party platform contain anything related to mental health?

Yes. The Liberal platform contains a strong commitment to mental health in the form of the Canadian Brain Health Strategy. In addition, a number of other key platform commitments will all provide support to Canadians with mental illnesses. These include the long-term renewal of the Affordable Housing Framework, the Liberal Family Care Plan, better coverage of prescription drugs, the Poverty Reduction Plan for Canada, and our commitment to increase the number of doctors, nurses, and nurse practitioners working in rural areas.

In the 2014 renewal of the federal-provincial-territorial Health Accord, two specific areas will be priorities for a Liberal government: home care services and drug coverage. With more and more patient care taking place at home rather than in the hospital, we'll work with provinces and territories to ensure that Canadians in different parts of the country don't face significant variations in drug coverage, and home care services, including priority areas like mental health and palliative care.

A Liberal government will maintain the current 6% health care funding escalator beyond 2014, providing billions of dollars in new funding.

2. Do you support parity between resources made available for treatment of mental and physical health problems?

For Liberals, as for most Canadians, universal access to quality, timely care regardless of your ability to pay, and regardless of which province you live in, is part of what defines Canada. It is embedded in Canadian values, and in the Liberal record. Under Liberal leadership, the federal government will return to its long-established role as a strong partner in health and healthcare.

Liberals firmly believe that all Canadians must receive equal treatment regardless of the type of illness with which they are afflicted.

3. Do you support the specific inclusion of initiatives related to mental health and addictions in the 2004 federal-provincial health accord?

Yes. Moreover, a Liberal government, together with the provinces and territories, created the 2004 Health Accord and are strongly committed to its renewal in 2014.

4. Less than one-third of persons with mental health problems receive needed services. What will your party do to enhance access to mental health services and address the shortage of mental health professionals in Canada?

Liberals believe that urgent action is necessary to address the critical doctor shortage in the country in order to ensure that our public health system provides sustainable, quality, timely, and accessible care to Canadians, including Canadians with mental illnesses.

Faced with a national shortage of 26,000 doctors, Stephen Harper's Conservatives have funded just 66 new doctor positions, less than one quarter of one percent of what is needed.

A Liberal government will work with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders to increase our capacity to train new doctors, and integrate qualified foreign-trained doctors into our health system.

Rural Canadians have long struggled with a level of health care service that is not on par with urban centres. In cooperation with provinces and territories, a Liberal government will introduce a new incentive by forgiving a portion of Canada Student Loans for doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners choosing to practice in a designated underserved small-town or rural community. Family doctors will be eligible for student loan forgiveness up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurses and nurse practitioners will be eligible for student loan forgiveness up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000. Quebec does not participate in the Canada Student Loans Program, therefore a Liberal government will work with the government of Quebec to determine the best ways to meet the objectives.

5. Will your party commit to increasing funding for mental health and mental illness research?

Yes. Liberals are committed to increasing funding for health and healthcare, including mental health, in the 2014 Health Accord renewal. A Liberal government will maintain the current 6% health care funding escalator beyond 2014, providing billions of dollars in new funding.

Even before 2014, a key component of our Brain Health Strategy is funding for research. In its first two years, a Liberal government will invest \$100 million in research into new treatments and therapies for neurological disorders, and accelerating progress in understanding, treating and preventing brain diseases. This investment of new federal funds will be channeled through leading national research bodies.

6. What will your party do to support individuals, families, the workplace and communities when it comes to mental health and illness?

A part of the Brain Health Strategy, and in addition to our commitment to research funding, a Liberal government will undertake a number of initiatives to better support Canadians with mental illness and their families:

Awareness, Education and Prevention. We will develop a public education campaign to encourage good brain health throughout life, including better understanding of how proper diet, physical and mental exercise slow down the decline of brain health. Public education efforts will also combat the social stigma attached to brain disease, and mental health problems.

Income security. We will conduct a review to identify potential measures needed to prevent brain disorders from forcing families and individuals into poverty. The Liberal plan for Family Care will make a significant difference, but more may be needed in the longer term to help the growing numbers of affected Canadian families cope.

Integrated Treatment and Support. We will disseminate knowledge and best practices to foster improvements in the quality of treatment and support for patients and families coping with brain disorders.

In addition a central component of our platform is the Liberal Family Care Plan. A Liberal government will deliver direct support to Canadians who care for elderly or seriously ill loved ones at home. The Liberal Plan for Family Care includes a Family Care Employment Insurance Benefit, allowing Canadians to take six months off work to care for loved ones without having to quit their jobs, and a Family Care Tax Benefit of up to \$1,350 a year to help low- and middle-income family caregivers manage the costs.