

November 16, 2021

**Subject: A Plan that Supports You: our health-care front line**

Dear health professional:

As we launch our health-care action plan this week, I want to recognize all of the people across the province who work every day to deliver health services to New Brunswickers, and welcome those of you back who have been out recently due to labour negotiations. Whether you are a nurse, doctor, pharmacist, paramedic, counsellor, administrator or one of the thousands more who have chosen to work in the health care sector in our province – this plan supports you.

The actions you will see are based on the feedback we heard through our nearly year-long consultation process. They represent the most urgent areas we need to address to start to fix a fragile system.

As our system operates currently, we are simply asking too much.

I know that you are tired and frustrated with staffing shortages and unexpected service interruptions.

I know you want and deserve to work in an environment that is respectful, staffed appropriately and one that values providers working to their full scope. Modern technology and processes that empower you to put the patient first are overdue.

I recognize that you are often faced with impossible situations, and that our aging population and the rise in mental illness and addictions in our province creates complex working conditions. Your health, safety, and wellness are vital to our success and we know we must tackle workplace violence.

The pandemic has made it worse. You've been called upon time and again to juggle patient loads, calm loved ones, and give those infected and hospitalized with COVID-19 the dignity and care they so need. You do all of this and more at great personal risk, routinely exposed to infection and often working against the clock with little opportunity for rest or to connect with your own families. For that, we are truly grateful.



But gratitude is not enough. We have a responsibility to design a system, and put in place recruitment and retention strategies, that are as good for you as they will be for New Brunswickers.

I am confident that when we start to deliver on the actions outlined in the plan, we'll be taking important steps in that direction.

Over the coming 24 months, you will see the following changes and more:

- A new model for access to primary care to better serve New Brunswickers, which will limit the number of unnecessary visits to the emergency rooms;
- An improved process for referrals and scheduling of surgeries that makes better use of resources province-wide and significantly improves wait times;
- Changes that empower citizens to proactively manage their health to prevent illness and disease through access to personal health records, the ability to self-schedule for tests, and make choices about how and where to receive specialized services;
- Expanded walk-in clinics and mobile clinics for addictions and mental health services.

These are just a few of the improvements that I believe will make the system better for health-care professionals everywhere in the province. Importantly, our government has appointed a task force to provide accountability on this plan. It will also ensure that we regularly engage with health-care workers across the province so that your voice is included as we implement improvements.

We can do better, and we will. It's time to focus on you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Dorothy Shephard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

K. Dorothy Shephard  
Minister