January 25, 2021

Dear Party Leader,

Today about 120,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, are living with arthritis and the number is expected to grow. That is more than 1 in 4, the highest prevalence across all provinces. There are over 100 different types of arthritis, with osteoarthritis and inflammatory arthritis being the most common forms. It is one of the major health challenges facing the country and our healthcare system.

With the provincial election approaching on February 13, and as an organization with a vision to live in a world free of the devastating effects of arthritis, we are writing to ask political parties what they will do to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians living with arthritis and how they plan to reduce wait times for joint replacement surgery.

As we continue to confront COVID-19, a new health challenge is emerging — an alarming backlog of joint replacement surgeries. Arthritis is the leading cause of joint replacement, including over 99% of knee replacements and over 80% of hip replacements. Even before COVID-19, there were already significant challenges meeting the benchmark for knee and hip replacement surgeries. In fact, recent data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) shows that joint replacement surgery wait times in Newfoundland and Labrador are not reaching the medically recommended guideline of six months, with only 72% of knee replacements and 76% of hip replacements meeting the guideline.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with arthritis deserve healthy and active lives. It is critical that priority be placed on developing and implementing a strategy to reduce wait times and improve access to joint replacement surgery now.

If your party is elected to form Newfoundland and Labrador's next government, what steps will you take to implement tangible solutions to reduce wait times for joint replacement surgery and meet the medically recommended guideline within your mandate?

Please send your response by email to jmitchell@arthritis.ca. We look forward to your timely response, which we will share in our communications with our arthritis community. Thank you for taking the time to consider and respond to our request.

Sincerely,

Jone Mitchell
Executive Director, Atlantic Region
Arthritis Society