

December 24, 2024

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health of Ontario
email: sylvia.jones@ontario.ca

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance of Ontario
email: Minister.fin@ontario.ca

Re: Pre-Budget Submission on need for Ontario to invest now in primary health care staff recruitment and retention and help end the crisis facing Ontarians

Dear Deputy Premier Jones and Minister Bethlenfalvy,

Primary health care is in crisis. We know you don't need to hear again what is blaring from headlines across our province, but it bears repeating here because it is the daily experience of the Ontarians in desperate need of access to primary health care. It bears repeating because our staffing challenges remain significant, and they're getting bigger.

Here at Brock Community Health Centre in the Township of Brock, we are doing everything we can to keep providing services to those who face the most barriers to health. However, the staffing crisis in primary health care, related to gaps in wages that go back more than a decade, is making it nearly impossible to retain and recruit crucial staff. This results in us not being able to take on more patients into our primary care practice, having an understaffed primary care team and not being able to hire a Social Worker for mental health services.

We need your help. We know you believe in investing in primary health care as the foundation of an integrated health system. We've seen that in the expanded teams announcements earlier this year. However, more needs to be done to ensure the success of those new teams, as well as the existing ones that are strained across the province.

We serve populations marginalized and underserved by other parts of the health system; those who face the greatest barriers to health and the poorest health outcomes. The people and communities in Ontario who face the greatest barriers to health care rely on our members to provide primary health care, mental health, community services and supports. We also know that marginalized people are those who are most likely to become the sickest, to be in the hospital the longest, and to require more resources from the acute care systems if we don't help address health issues sooner.

Ontario needs to make investments in comprehensive primary health care that support an integrated health care system to provide connected and convenient care for people in Ontario.

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For the Ontario Budget 2025, we propose the Ontario Government focus on funding investments in three (3) key areas to ensure Ontarians have access to the health professionals they need, in the right place, at the right time:

1. **Invest in Health Human Resources for inter-professional primary health care teams.** Ontario needs to invest approximately **\$430.9 million** over 5 years, including an annual adjustment of 2.90%, in the primary care sector in Ontario to close the significant wage gap.
2. **Invest in community primary health care organizations through base funding increases to sustain health for communities in Ontario.** Ontario needs to invest in a base budget increase of 5% or **\$33.7 million** for community-governed comprehensive primary health care organizations.
3. **Invest \$9.7 million so primary health care teams in Ontario can implement social prescribing.** In the Alliance's Rx: Community Social Prescribing Pilot, 42% of providers reported that they observed a decrease in the number of repeat visits among their clients who participated in a social prescribing program.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues and for taking the time to learn about our urgent concerns. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this timely and pressing matter further.

Sincerely,



Janet McPherson
Executive Director

Cc:

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