



association of family
health teams of ontario

400 University Avenue, Suite 2100, Toronto ON M5G 1S5

April 15, 2024

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier & Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
5th Floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Jones,

On behalf of the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) and our 190 members, including the over 2000 family physicians and 2400 healthcare professionals we represent across the province, we are writing to thank you for the government's historic investment in primary care teams profiled in the 2024 Ontario Budget.

Through this investment of \$546 million over three years, more Ontarians will have access to connected and comprehensive primary care services, helping to improve patient outcomes and relieve pressure on acute care settings such as emergency departments. This strategic investment not only bolsters the existing framework of primary care teams, but also reinforces their role as the cornerstone of Ontario's health care system.

Evidence and experience from around the world show that an engaged primary care sector is foundational to improving and integrating care for patients. As the government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health, determines the process for rolling out this investment over the next three years, it is our sincere hope that the government will work with AFHTO as a key implementation partner, leveraging our expertise and networks with primary care providers across the province to reach our shared goal of connecting all Ontarians to primary care.

It takes a team to provide comprehensive primary care. The community health workforce encompasses a range of specialized health care roles, many of which are essential to team-based primary care models, including nurses in primary care, addiction and social workers in mental health organizations, and personal support workers in home and community care and long-term care.

While we welcome the government's targeted investments in the 2024 Ontario Budget to strengthen Ontario's health care workforce, there is an urgent need to take further steps to address the staffing crisis facing Ontario's community health sector. Specifically, a comprehensive health human resources strategy is required to reduce the substantial – and increasing – wage gap between primary and community care and other parts of Ontario's health care system, such as acute care. A commitment to sustainably grow our health care workforce requires an approach that includes all providers across our health care system and



association of family
health teams of ontario

400 University Avenue, Suite 2100, Toronto ON M5G 1S5

sustained investments that account for inflation. Fixing the health human resource crisis will help ensure the \$546 million investment has the impact we all want it to.

Our shared goal is to transform primary care in Ontario into a patient-centric, comprehensive, and connected system that meets the diverse needs of our communities. We firmly believe that by working collaboratively, we can make substantial progress toward achieving this goal. To that end, AFHTO is committed to continue working with the government to advance the implementation of primary care teams, primary care networks, Ontario Health Team maturation, contract modernization, and other key priorities related to primary care.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to expanding team-based primary care services to more Ontarians. We look forward to further discussions and collaboration to expand primary care teams to all Ontarians and provide connected and convenient care for our great province.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Samson
President & Chair, AFHTO Board of
Directors

Leslie Sorensen
CEO, AFHTO

Cc: Ms. Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Ms. Teresa Buchanan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Ms. Nadia Surani, Director, Ministry of Health
Mr. Matthew Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Health
Dr. Sacha Bhatia, Senior Vice-President, Ontario Health
Ms. Zahra Ismail, Senior Director, Ontario Health
Mr. David Pearson, Director, Ontario Health