

## AFHTO Pre-Budget Recommendations for the 2019 Ontario Budget

*“A greater emphasis on primary care can be expected to lower the costs of care, improve health through access to more appropriate services and reduce inequities in the population’s overall health”<sup>1</sup>. This seminar research by the late Dr. Barbara Starfield and colleagues forms the basis of what many jurisdictions will agree to be true – an investment in creating a robust primary health care system will lead to a higher performing health system with better patient outcomes and less cost to the system.*

AFHTO and its members are already showing that they are a solution to the current issues related to hallway healthcare, but a lot more needs to be done in order to ensure we have a health care system that is truly patient-centric and focused on keeping people out of the hospital and back into their homes.

### **1. Mental Health and Addictions**

People across Ontario are waiting longer for mental health and addiction services, and hospitals report unnecessary emergency department visits from patients who have been waiting months for mental health services, often seeing the same patients coming through their emergency room doors since they cannot access services and supports in their communities. Hearing directly from primary care providers, we know that mental health is the biggest challenge for them – there are not enough resources to support our patients and wait lists for community supports are long and unwieldy. Our health care system is siloed, so now is the time to ensure that mental health and addictions supports are built directly with primary care to allow for continuity of care.

#### ***Budget Request:***

***We need a health system that is truly integrated, one where patients do not have to move from one part of the system to another part to get their care, especially care for mental health and addictions. In this upcoming budget, we ask the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care work directly with primary care and mental health care providers to ensure that mental health and addictions investments are integrated in primary care.***

### **2. Home and Community Care Coordination with Primary Care**

AFHTO and its members affirm that comprehensive care coordination is a dimension of quality primary care that is patient-centered and leads to effective and more seamless transitions between settings and among providers. Effective care coordination reduces duplication, increases quality of care, facilitates access and contributes to better value by reducing costs. It ensures continuity of care for patients regardless of setting, including home, community, hospital, long-term care facility or with their primary care team.

#### ***Budget Request:***

***In the 2019 Budget, we ask the Ministry strengthen the relationship between primary care and home and community care by transitioning the function and associated resources of care coordination to primary care. This will bring greater efficiency and patient-centredness to care. Care will be integrated, allowing for seamless transitions of care for patients.***

### 3. Increase Access to Interprofessional Team-Based Primary Care for More Ontarians

***Budget Request:***

***AFHTO asks the Ministry to support expansion of interprofessional team-based care across Ontario. This can start with communities that do not have a team at all and then expand to all Ontarians who wish for it. Allow for local level innovation but ensure that primary care providers are involved in the co-design on what would work best for them in their communities and for their patients.***

Primary care teams provide value for health dollars by speeding up access to care and offering a wider range of programs and services to promote health and manage chronic disease. They bring together the variety of skills needed to help people stay as healthy as possible. Ontario has made significant progress building a more coordinated and comprehensive primary care system to meet the needs of patients and governments by investing in interprofessional primary care teams where a range of health professionals work together to provide comprehensive primary care.

### 4. Supporting the Quality Agenda by Supporting Improvement

***Budget Request:***

***In the 2019 Budget, we ask the Ministry to look at existing models of performance measurement in primary care and to facilitate and fund a strategy that spreads it across the system. This strategy must measure outcomes that matter to patients and providers while assisting in lower system costs. To support this, there needs to be further investments in quality improvement practice facilitators to help support front line providers.***

Performance measurement is essential to assessing and improving quality of care. Performance measures must be consistent and comparable across the province, while allowing adaptability for the local context. By identifying those who excel at care delivery, we can learn from one another and scale up improvements to providers in a positive and not punitive way.

*The Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) is the advocate, network and resource centre for interprofessional comprehensive primary care teams. Our members make up 184 family health teams, 5 Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics, 1 Community Health Centre, 1 Mississauga Integrated Care Centre and 1 Indigenous Interprofessional Primary Care Team, collectively taking care of over 3 million patients.*

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<sup>i</sup> Starfield et al, "Contributions of Primary Care to the Health Systems and Health", Millbank Quarterly, 83(3), 2005.