

December 18, 2014

Re: Conference Board of Canada Report on Family Health Teams

Ontario's Family Health Teams (FHTs) were created because evidence from around the world showed that when teams of health professionals work collaboratively rather than independently, patients are the beneficiaries of faster access to care and better overall health. The report from the Conference Board of Canada released today confirms that interprofessional care teams are doing just that.

Most notably, the report finds that FHTs rank among the best in the world for same-day appointments, with almost 80% of patients reporting that they are able to get an appointment with their family doctor or primary care provider on the same day they need one. This compares to recent surveys which show that only 40% of Ontarians are able to obtain access within 24 hours.

The report also highlights the innovative programs that FHTs are providing to patients with chronic diseases, and the benefits that come with having the expertise of dietitians, nurse practitioners and others to help provide more tailored care.

By providing same-day access to care, FHTs are doing a better job at keeping patients out of costly emergency rooms. By offering programs that help identify disease earlier and focus on healthy living to prevent illness in the first place, FHTs are keeping Ontarians healthier and saving the health system resources.

We're proud of our success to date, but recognize that there are areas where we can do better. In the coming months, we'll take action on some of the key recommendations from this report including addressing our ability to recruit and retain health professionals to work in interprofessional care models like FHTs. In collaboration with the provincial government we believe we can expand access to interprofessional care teams like FHTs, and enhance the programs we're offering to patients who are already benefitting.

Angie Heydon, Executive Director