

**September 29, 2020**

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier's Office  
Room 281, Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier,

Ontario has now surpassed the highest number of daily cases that were identified during wave 1 in the spring. With 700 cases reported yesterday, it is time to look at stricter public health measures to curb the escalation of the pandemic this fall.

Family Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and primary care teams are at the frontline of care and many of them were, and continue to be, redeployed to hospitals, long-term care facilities and assessment centres. We support the Ontario Hospital Association and multiple other health and community sector stakeholders with the call for stricter measures to address these escalating numbers before the situation becomes unmanageable. The measures announced on September 25<sup>th</sup> are not sufficient. Protecting the most vulnerable in the province and conserving the limited health care resources we have should be our number one priority.

Increased support for schools to reduce class sizes and facilitating physical distancing is essential. Parents must feel safe sending their children to school and not worry about a child's sickness possibly impacting their ability to work, especially those on the frontlines. To enable schools to stay open and to prevent an unmanageable demand on the healthcare system, temporary restrictions should also be in place for non-essential businesses, such as indoor dining and bars, movie theatres, gyms and places of worship. A return to Stage 2 in regions where numbers are increasing substantially such as Toronto, the Greater Toronto Area and Ottawa is necessary now in order to reduce what will be an overwhelming impact on not just acute care capacity but also congregate settings like Long-Term Care Homes that have already been hit with so much devastation and loss of lives this year.

Stronger contact tracing and faster testing with increased lab capacity must be priorities, especially with expanded asymptomatic testing in pharmacies. Public communications need to be clearer with direct messaging about what each individual is responsible for if we are to combat this virus. COVID-19 can be managed if people act on physical distancing, practice proper hand washing, and wear a face covering when needed. Social bubbles have exploded and these need to be rolled back to smaller numbers. The health and economic wellbeing for all Ontarians rely on the actions taken by each one of us. Expectations must be understood and enforced across the province and by the province.

The repercussions on businesses forced to close will be devastating and we all know that many businesses are still struggling today. Government supports at all levels will be needed to help, but right now there is an immediate need to act decisively and return to Stage 2 for those regions experiencing a high number of cases.

Family Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and primary care teams stepped up to keep our communities and hospitals safe during the first wave and are prepared to continue to be the foundation, but the demand for that care must be manageable, and at this rate it will not be.

Thank you for your continued work to battle this pandemic and to support the lives and wellbeing of every Ontarian.

Sincerely,

*Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario*



Dr. Tom Richard  
President and Board Chair



Kavita Mehta  
Chief Executive Officer

*Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario*



Shawn Dookie  
President



Dana Cooper  
Executive Director

*Ontario College of Family Physicians*



Dr. Elizabeth Muggah  
President and Board Chair



Leanne Clarke  
Chief Executive Officer

cc. Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health  
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Mark Lawson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Policy, Office of the Premier  
Heather Watt, Chief of Staff, Minister of Health  
Laurel Brazill, Director of Stakeholder Relations, Minister of Health  
Anthony Dale, President & CEO, Ontario Hospital Association