

The Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) is dedicated to advancing team-based primary care across the province. Representing **190 interprofessional primary care teams serving 3.5 million people**, AFHTO advocates for an **accessible, equitable, and sustainable primary care system** that meets the needs of all Ontarians.

AFHTO is seeking support from the provincial government in the upcoming Budget 2025 to prioritize targeted expansion for primary care teams, close the wage gap to strengthen the primary care workforce, and ensure proper development and governance is given to Ontario Health Teams and Primary Care Networks. Championing these recommendations and priorities will help prevent further exacerbation of the health care system, promote a healthier workforce, and help drive business investments in the province. This will help to uplift the system and make primary care accessible to more Ontarians. Our recommendations for Budget 2025 are as follows:

Recommendation 1

Invest Strategically in Targeted Team Expansion

- Focus new primary care team investments in regions with a high number of unattached patients and significant community gaps. This can be achieved by creating a **coverage plan to create new primary care teams** in areas where there is a lack of interdisciplinary team based primary care available and **expanding funding within existing models** where possible.
 - A key consideration for rural and northern primary care, given the population distribution, Indigenous communities, and geographical distance to and from acute care and diagnostics services, is **strengthening the level of integration** to alleviate pressures faced in hospitals and maximize returns on investments made to the broader health system.
- **Invest in digital health infrastructure**, by providing seamless, integrated care across primary care teams and other care settings, like community pharmacies.

Recommendation 2

Close the Wage Gap to Strengthen the Primary Care Workforce

- Provide **\$430 million (\$86 million annually for 5 years) to close the wage gap and support workforce sustainability** in primary care and across the sector.
 - The Ontario government can **lead the establishment of a market value compensation strategy** for primary care and commit to a plan to achieve the compensation levels in the sector within a feasible time frame.
 - **Transition FHTs to global budgets**, as seen with CHCs to enable flexibility in addressing documented increases in operating costs as well as open the door for changes to compensation and recruitment strategies based on local needs.
 - Broadening the HHR strategy to include **scope-of-practice and rural incentives** would position primary care teams to better address diverse community health needs.

Recommendation 3

Support the Development and Governance of Ontario Health Teams to Ensure Primary Care Networks (PCNs) Represent All Primary Care Providers

- Formalize collaborative governance models to **ensure equal representation between primary care and acute care on OHT boards**, fostering collaboration in health planning.