

Strengthening Primary Care in Ontario

2025 Pre-Budget Submission



Family Doctors: Caring for Ontarians, For Life

Family doctors are the cornerstone of Ontario's healthcare system, supporting patients through every stage of life. The government has taken a number of positive steps to strengthen our system, and we applaud the appointment of Dr. Jane Philpott to lead the new Primary Care Action Team and their efforts to connect every person in Ontario to primary health care within five years.

We are ready to work with you to make this a reality.

The Solutions

We can ensure every Ontarian, no matter where they live, has access to a family doctor. And that every family doctor can focus even more on what matters most - their patients. Here's How:

1

Technology: Smarter, More Efficient Workflows

Investing in technology can transform how family doctors work, reducing administrative workloads, releasing more time for patient care, and improving the patient experience. For example:

- **AI Scribes:** Proven through pilot projects to reduce time spent on documentation, enabling family doctors to focus on direct patient care.
- **A Centralized Referral System:** Streamlining the process to connect patients with specialists and diagnostics faster, eliminating inefficiencies.

The OCFP is calling for the government to prioritize and implement these tools with input from frontline physicians, ensuring they are interoperable, user-friendly, and that strategies are in place to help with onboarding.

2

Teams: Better Access for Patients

Primary care teams support a broad range of patient needs—especially for complex patients. While recent investments and further commitments are a positive step, about 70% of family doctors currently do not have access to team-based resources to best support their patients.

- Expand interprofessional primary care teams in high-need areas, targeting unattached patients and family doctors and their patients with no/limited access to team-based care.

Every family doctor needs access to an interprofessional team to help patients stay healthier in their communities and avoid hospital visits.

3

Workforce: A More Attractive Proposition

The wage disparity between primary care and other publicly funded health settings continues to grow, impacting access to the frontline care Ontarians rely on. What's needed:

- Ensure family doctors are fairly remunerated to reflect the complexity of care they provide, improving retention and encouraging new graduates to enter family medicine.
- Address the wage gap for allied health care professionals working in primary care teams to ensure patients can access the care they need.

Investing in Ontario's primary care workforce is an essential part of attracting and retaining the skilled professionals that are the foundation of patient care.

4

Building Better, Connected Care

We see key opportunities to support the work of the Primary Care Action Team (PCAT), enhance provincial vaccination efforts, and strengthen care and working conditions in Northern Ontario.

- Leverage the tools and services of key partners, such as the OCFP's Community of Practice and Leadership Academy, to help advance the work of PCAT and facilitate change with family doctors.
- Create an interoperable provincial immunization registry to improve access to records for patients and those immunizing them, and to reduce unnecessary administrative burden.
- Create a Rural Coordination Centre for Northern Ontario to support workforce, education, recruitment, and retention needs in the North, with a goal to expand to rural areas provincewide.

Every Ontarian deserves a primary care sector and a system that is capable of delivering more timely, seamless care.

Why It Matters

Having a family doctor means:



The right care in the right place



Staying healthy and preventing illnesses before they happen



Decreased hospitalization



Reduced health care costs

About OCFP

The Ontario College of Family Physicians represents more than 18,000 family physicians and medical students, including residents, retired family physicians, and more than 15,000 who are working in communities providing care to patients. Our members care for Ontarians across the health system, in primary care offices, hospitals and emergency departments, urgent care centres and walk-in clinics, as well as through home and long-term care, palliative care and more.

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