

Ontario Healthcare Awareness & Action Plan

THE KEY POINTS:

1. The Government is knowingly *UNDER*-funding Ontario's healthcare needs:

Ontario's population is growing and aging, but the Government has decided to pay for less than half of the additional care that will be needed. This is a problem.

- By the Ministry of Health's own estimates, demand for medical care will grow by at least 2.7 per cent per year (\$307 million) due to population growth in Ontario and an aging population that needs more complex care. However, the Government is only willing to fund 1.25 per cent (\$142 million).
- Every year, 140,000 new patients come into our health care system in Ontario – that's about the population of Prince Edward Island. The Government is refusing to fund for this growth.
- Growth for medical services has increased by an average of three per cent annually over the past five years.
- In Ontario, we already have too few doctors to treat the current population. Within Canada, Ontario has a low supply of doctors (7th in country).
- Based on the Government's own data, there are still about *one million* people who do not have a family doctor.
- Other provincial Governments (such as British Columbia and Alberta) have faced similar challenges. They have accepted their responsibility to account for the changing needs of their populations by recognizing their obligation to continue to fund system growth.

2. The Government has put a "Hard Cap" (a maximum limit) on the amount of care that doctors can provide for patients:

Doctors always put patients first. Doctors also realize the Ontario Government is in financial crisis. That is why, after already over two years of fee cuts, doctors offered the Government to *freeze* their fees. The Government *rejected* this offer and instead imposed additional cuts. Worse than that, they have put a "**hard cap**" on physician services. **This means the Government has now placed a *maximum limit* on how many patients doctors can see and how much care they provide to patients in need. Furthermore, the Government will now *penalize* doctors who go over these limits.**

- Any care provided to patients beyond the limit set by the Government will not be funded.
- By putting a limit on the amount of money the Government will pay physicians for their services, the Government is setting a limit on the number of patients who can be treated by doctors in Ontario and has made it clear that all doctors will be penalized if more patients are seen above the arbitrary limit set by the Government.

- *This is the same as telling firefighters they are only allowed to put out a certain number of fires each year. If they go over that limit, they will be penalized and their wages will be reduced!!*
- The hard cap applies to *all* family doctors and specialists. ***It is an intentional disincentive for doctors to see new patients or provide care for patients.***
- Physicians will be penalized if they provide any additional care. Naturally, this will lead to physicians:
 - reducing hours.
 - reducing the number of days they work each week or month.
 - limiting the number of patients seen per day.

3. Family Medicine has once again become a less attractive specialty:

Back in the year 2000, family doctors were vastly undervalued. Morale was low. Medical students chose to specialize instead of going into Family Medicine. This led to an enormous shortage of family doctors. Fortunately, over the last 15 years, tremendous improvements were made to make family medicine a more attractive option of practice. Team-based care became more common. Family doctors were able to form groups to offer more comprehensive care to patients, and family physicians were paid more attractively. This all led to revival in family medicine. Today, over 2.5 million patients who did not have a family doctor 10 years ago now have one.

- The Government has now cuts all physician services by 2.65%, including include family doctors and specialists.
- However, the Government made *additional* cuts to several different areas that specifically targeted family doctors. The final result is that the Government has cut back funding to family doctors by 10-15% per year.
- The Government is now putting extreme restrictions for new family doctors to join existing teams.
- The Government is now also restricting *where* new family doctors can practice.
- The Government's cuts that specifically target family doctors are *reversing* all of the progress that has been made over the last 15 years.

4. Doctors are trying to improve our Healthcare System:

In the past, Ontario's doctors and the Government have worked well together to build strong partnerships and transform health care delivery:

- In 2012, Ontario's doctors accepted a 5 per cent cut for over two years.
- By the Government's own tally, as a direct result of that cut, Ontario's doctors helped save more than \$850 million in costs over the past two years.
- Compared to 2008, there have been 6.4 million more patient visits to physicians in 2012.

- As above, over 2.5 million patients who did not have a family doctor 10 years ago now have one.
- Today, there are 4,000 more doctors in Ontario than in 2003.
- Patient satisfaction in Ontario is number 1 in Canada. (Canada Health Consumer Index 2011).
- ER wait times are down as are visits to the ER for less-urgent and non-urgent cases in large part because family doctors are providing after hours care in their offices.

5. How this Affects Patients:

The Government's actions are going to affect *you* or someone you love. As explained above, ***the Government is knowingly funding the system for less care than is needed, and doctors will be penalized if they see too many patients.***

All of this will lead to:

- longer wait times and decreased access to see a family doctor.
- less family doctors practicing in Ontario.
- longer wait times in the ER.
- longer wait times and decreased access to have a test done.
- longer wait times and decreased access to see a specialist.
- longer wait times and decreased access to have a surgery.
- decreased quality of care all around.

Examples of how this will affect YOU, your FAMILY, and your FRIENDS:

- If you do not currently have a family doctor, it is going to get even harder to find one.
- If your doctor retires or leaves town, it is very likely you will not be able to get another one.
- If you move to a new town, there is a good chance you will not be able to get a family doctor.
- If your community has done a good job recruiting new family doctors to your area, all of this progress will come to an end. It will become difficult to attract new family doctors to your community, because there will not be as many family doctors to replace those who are retiring.
- When less people have family doctors, wait times in the ER are going to get even longer.
- It already takes nine months, or longer, to see most specialists or to have a surgery. The wait times are going to get even worse.
- With the "Hard Cap" the Government has placed on physician services, if there is another SARS or Ebola outbreak in Ontario, there will not be any funding to provide care because it will surely go over the Government's allowed budget.

THE SOLUTIONS:

Ontario's doctors recognize the financial crisis that the Ontario Government is facing. However, they also know that Ontario's population is growing, aging, and becoming increasingly complex to care for. In other words, the cost of Ontario's healthcare is growing, but the Government's ability to pay for it is shrinking.

We are on a sinking ship, headed for disaster. Desperate, short term reactions like cutting straight percentage points off the budget are not going to help in the long term because they will not fix the sinking ship.

Instead, we need *Healthcare Reform*:

- Doctors and the Government know there is waste and inefficiency within the healthcare system.
- With thoughtful health care reform, they could easily save even more money than the all of the cuts the Government has placed on physician services.
- Strategies such as *Choosing Wisely* (<http://www.choosingwiselycanada.org>) or *Less is More Medicine* (<http://www.lessismoremedicine.com>) are examples of how we can save money and *improve* care at the same time!
- Dr. Scott Wooder has some excellent thoughts on healthcare reform:
 - <https://drscottwooder.wordpress.com/2015/07/21/ontario-needs-physician-payment-reform-so-do-doctors/>
- Yet another possible solution could be to allow a “two-tier” system (a mixture of both private and public funding). European countries have this and their healthcare systems perform *even better* than our Canadian system.

Doctors and the Government have worked collaboratively in the past to find solutions for healthcare reform. The same can be done this time. Let us build on our successes.

***** WHAT YOU NEED TO DO *****

1. VISIT ONTARIOS DOCTORS' WEBSITE AND SEND A LETTER OF SUPPORT:

- This takes less than a minute to do!
- Go to www.ontariosdoctors.com
- Scroll to the bottom of the page to the "Show Support" section.
- Fill in your name, email and postal code and press *SEND*. This will automatically send your letter of support to your local MPP.
- You can even edit and customize the default template letter, if you wish.

2. DIRECTLY CONTACT YOUR LOCAL MPP:

- Unfortunately, simply nodding your head or 'Liking' on Facebook is not enough.
- **Please take action! You need to contact your MPP directly!** (See below on various options on how to do this).
- The Government needs to hear from each and every individual concerned citizen!

When you contact your MPP:

- **Voice your support for Ontario's doctors.**
- **Request that the Government immediately and even retroactively reverse is cuts to physician services.**
- **Request that the Government return to meaningful and respectful negotiations with physicians, and work together to find solutions to Ontario's Healthcare crisis.**
- **Request that your MPP take your message back to Parliament for action!**

3. SPREAD AWARENESS:

- *Everyone* needs to become aware and take action.
- Share this information package with your friends, family, co-workers, local mayors and council members, volunteer groups, etc.
- Become active and share on Social Media (Facebook and Twitter – see below for more information.)
- Use email, fax, paper or whatever means necessary to spread awareness.
- Contact your local newspaper to report personal stories on how these cuts will impact you!
- Write editorial letters to the editor in your local newspapers!
- Your healthcare is at stake!

HOW TO TAKE ACTION:

How to Contact your MPP:

Contact your MPP and voice your concerns. Call, email, fax, or schedule a meeting!

If you do not know who your MPP is, go to [Elections Ontario](http://www.elections.on.ca) to find out:
http://fyed.elections.on.ca/fyed/en/form_page_en.jsp

Here is a [list of all MPPs](#):

http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/members/members_current.do?locale=en&channel_id=%7B923146e7-4d81-42a8-99f0-e61f5ab50387%7D&lang=en

Local MPPs for Southeastern Ontario:

[Todd Smith](#) - Prince Edward and Hastings County (Conservative Party):

Phone: 613-962-1144

Fax: 613-969-6381

Email: todd.smithco@pc.ola.org

Twitter: @ToddSmithPC

[Lou Rinaldi](#) - Northumberland and Quinte West (Liberal Party):

Phone: 613-475-1040

Fax: 613-392-2241

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[Sophie Kiwala](#) - Kingston and the Islands (Liberal Party):

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Fax: 613-547-5001

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Twitter: @SophieKiwala

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Spread awareness and communicate on Facebook and Twitter!

- Search or use the hash tag: **#CareNotCuts**
- Tweet your local MPP, Health Minister Erik Hoskins, and Premier Kathleen Wynne to show support for Ontario's Doctors. *(Remember to use #CareNotCuts*
- Suggested people to follow and tweet:
 - Premier Kathleen Wynne (@Kathleen_Wynne)
 - Health Minister Erik Hoskins (@DrEricHoskins)
 - Ontario Medical Association (@OntariosDoctors)
 - Ontario Ministry of Health (@ONThealth)
 - Your local MPP, whoever that may be

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES:

[Ontario's Doctors](#) website:

- <http://www.ontariosdoctors.com>

[Ontario Medical Association:](#)

- <https://www.oma.org/Pages/default.aspx>
- OMA Members Log in for updates
 - Log in → Resources Tab → “Unilateral Action – Negotiations 2014”

[Dr. Shawn Whatley's blog:](#)

- <http://shawnwhatley.com>
- has some excellent articles related to healthcare cuts

[Dr. Scott Wooder's blog:](#)

- <https://drscottwooder.wordpress.com>
- has some excellent articles related to healthcare cuts
- especially his [article here on healthcare reform](#)