

January 19, 2021

Dear Minister,

We would like to thank you and your team for your ongoing work in ensuring the people of Ontario stay safe as we combat the pandemic. Your tireless efforts are greatly appreciated.

We are writing about a commitment of funding that was made by your government in the Fall 2020 budget to provide interprofessional teams with additional funding to support people in the community struggling with mental health and addiction challenges. As your government pointed out in the budget *COVID-19 has had significant impact on mental health and addictions (MHA) across the province. There has also been a disproportionate impact on individuals with existing mental health and addictions challenges.* Prior to COVID, MHA was the biggest clinical pain point in primary care with limited support and resources. With the pandemic, the crisis has only increased and every primary care provider is now seeing MHA at each visit, whether in-person or virtual.

That is why we were grateful for the \$3M that was committed through the budget to help Community Health Centres, Family Health Teams, Indigenous Primary Health Care Teams and Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics with the increased demand of MHA in their clinics. Though we are grateful for this funding support, Minister, we are very concerned that the funding has not yet flowed to the teams. Primary care teams do not carry reserve dollars in their budgets and as a result, they cannot roll out clinical or service support without the funds in their accounts. We are now in mid January and the funding has not yet flowed and yet, the funding is expected to be spent by March 31st. Added to the complexity is that CHCs receive their funding from Ontario Health so they have an added layer of approvals which means their funding may take even longer to get to the respective CHCs in the province.

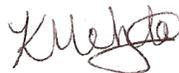
Minister, we are sure you are just as concerned as we are with the MHA crisis that currently exists so we are writing to ask your office for help to expedite the approval letters so that the funding can flow to the respective interprofessional teams. Given the tight timelines to actually spend the funds, we are also asking you to allow those funds to spread into the next fiscal year so that the money can be spent thoughtfully to help support those who need it the most.

We look forward to hearing from you soon and would be happy to answer any questions or address any concerns you may have.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Hobbs, CEO
Alliance for Healthier
Communities



Kavita Mehta, CEO
Association of Family Health
Teams of Ontario



Jennifer Clement, Past-Chair
Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic
Association

c. Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Joyce Mankarios, Director of Policy, Minister's Office
Laurel Brazill, Director of Stakeholder Relations, Minister's Office
Nadia Surani, Director of Primary Health Care, Ministry of Health
Caroline Lidstone-Jones, CEO, Indigenous Primary Health Care Council