



# Shaping the future

STRENGTHENING  
TEAM-BASED  
PRIMARY CARE

## Cover images

**Top:** Prince Edward FHT

**Middle row, left:** Toronto Western FHT

**Middle row, right:** North York FHT

**Bottom:** Health Care at Eva Rothwell Centre,  
Hamilton FHT, Greater Hamilton Health Network

# Reflections and Looking to the Future

## MESSAGE FROM AFHTO'S PRESIDENT



Dear AFHTO Members, Partners, and Stakeholders,

In a year of immense challenges and opportunities in our healthcare system, the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) has been dedicated to supporting our members and shaping the evolving landscape of primary care in Ontario.

This year, we continued to equip our members with essential tools and insights. The **Eckler Report** provided valuable data on the health human resources landscape, and our **Advocacy Toolkit**, along with the **Interprofessional Healthcare Providers and Executive Director HHR Surveys**, offered key resources to support recruitment and retention efforts. We remain committed to advocating for funding to address pay disparities between primary care and other health sectors, an ongoing priority in our efforts to foster a sustainable healthcare system.

AFHTO's role as a leader in Ontario's health system transformation is growing. We are actively shaping policy discussions and promoting innovation in team-based primary care. Our vision is clear: **to achieve equitable access to excellent team-based primary care for every person in Ontario.**

During this time of transition, the contributions of our interim CEO, Mike McMahon, have been invaluable. His strong leadership, insight, ability to engage with members and partners, and skills in strengthening AFHTO have driven us forward. We are grateful for his dedication during this pivotal period.

We also recognize the dedication and contributions of our excellent staff, whose commitment and hard work have been essential in achieving our goals. Their contributions reflect the collective strength of AFHTO.

A special thanks to our board members, whose knowledge, skills, and unwavering support have been both inspirational and essential to our success.

We are excited to welcome our new CEO, Jess Rogers. With over 20 years of experience in healthcare transformation, advocacy, and leadership, Jess brings a wealth of knowledge and passion for strengthening team-based primary care in Ontario. Her deep commitment to improving outcomes for all Ontarians makes her an excellent addition to AFHTO.

Looking ahead, our new strategic plan will guide us through several key initiatives. We will advocate by leading health system and primary care transformation, positioning AFHTO as an essential partner for change. We will support our members, enabling them to provide equitable and integrated team-based primary care to more Ontarians. Additionally, we will focus on excellence in governance and operations, both within AFHTO and among our members, ensuring that we consistently demonstrate value in all that we do. We are confident that we can help lead the way toward a stronger primary care system in Ontario.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration. Together, we will continue to strengthen primary care and improve health outcomes for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Samson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Kevin Samson  
President, AFHTO

# Stronger Together

## ADVANCING PRIMARY CARE IN ONTARIO

AFHTO is proud to continue its work with the **Primary Care Collaborative**, a coalition of primary care organizations collectively representing 14,000 family doctors, 1,000+ primary care nurse practitioners, 286 primary care teams, and 28 Indigenous primary care teams, including northern, rural, and remote teams.

### Advocating for a Strong Primary Care System: Pre-Budget Submissions

AFHTO made significant strides in our advocacy this year, including submitting pre-budget submissions to the Government of Ontario in collaboration with the Primary Care Collaborative.

The Primary Care Collaborative 2023 Pre-Budget Submission provided recommendations that need to be prioritized by the provincial government to deliver the care that Ontarians need and deserve, including:

- Make team-based primary care available to more Ontarians through an investment of an additional \$75 million per year for 10 years.
- Address the health human resource crisis in primary care through the creation of a primary care HHR table.

In addition to the recommendations provided in partnership with the Primary Care Collaborative, AFHTO's 2023 Pre-Budget Submission outlined two additional recommendations that will be essential to delivering care to Ontarians:

- Provide mental health and addictions services and home and community care in coordination with primary care.
- Provide resources to support the implementation of primary care networks (PCNs) and recognize PCNs as the organizing model for primary care.

### Investments in Team-Based Primary Care

Thanks to the ongoing advocacy efforts of AFHTO and our partners in primary care, in February 2024 the Ontario government announced a **\$110 million investment** in primary care, aiming to connect up to 328,000 individuals to team-based primary care.

The Ontario government also announced an additional **\$546 million** investment in Budget 2024 which aims to connect up to 600,000 individuals to team-based primary care.

This funding will support new and existing teams and ensure more Ontarians can access team-based care. AFHTO supported members' Expressions of Interest applications for funding to expand and establish these teams, and continues to work with members, the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health on the continued rollout of the funding.

### Closing the Wage Gap: For Us. For You.

Ontario's community healthcare sector – including Family Health Teams, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics and Community Health Centres – are facing a health human resources crisis.

Ten community health associations in Ontario, including AFHTO, have come together to launch an advocacy campaign to raise awareness about the growing wage gap facing the community health sector compared to other sectors, such as hospitals and schools. This wage gap amounts to more than \$2 billion and is causing a staffing crisis impacting the services and care Ontarians rely on.

As part of this work, AFHTO and its partners completed the Ontario Community Health Compensation Market Salary Review. The purpose of the study was to conduct a market review of compensation for clinical and non-clinical roles across healthcare sectors. The report identified several key findings:

- The community health sector is experiencing **significant staffing challenges**, including high turnover rates, minimal compensation increases, severe staffing shortages in rural areas, and limited growth opportunities.
- **Compensation** is the most pressing labour challenge.
- Benchmarked jobs in the community health sector are compensated **significantly less** than similar roles in Ontario's broader public sector, including hospitals, acute care, and the education sector.

Based on the findings of this report, the 10 associations released a Pre-Budget Submission, including actions that the Ontario government can take to address this wage gap. These include:

- Commit in Budget 2025 to **investing over \$500 million each year over the next five years** to close the wage gap between community health and other sectors.
- **Address Bill 124 shortfalls immediately**, as have other sectors.
- **Establish a community health human resources working group** with key government stakeholders across relevant ministries.

This work continues, and we will be engaging further with our members and our health partners this fall to support ongoing government advocacy.

**FOR US.  
FOR YOU.**





Team retreat, City of Lakes FHT

# Leading the way

## TRANSFORMING PRIMARY CARE

### Equitable and data-driven implementation of team-based primary care expansion

AFHTO has continued to work collaboratively with Ontario Health and the Ministry of Health to shape the future of team-based primary care in Ontario.

In June 2023, AFHTO conducted an analysis in collaboration with the Alliance for Healthier Communities to identify high-priority areas of the province that would benefit from the expansion of team-based primary care. This analysis incorporated data on patient attachment rates, population socioeconomic status, and marginalization dimensions, advocating for a data-driven and equitable approach to investments in the expansion of primary care teams. AFHTO continues to work closely with primary care partners and the government to inform the next phase of primary care team expansion.

### Evaluating and Modernizing Team-Based Primary Care

Working with our partners in primary care and Dr. Monica Aggarwal from the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, AFHTO is in the midst of a three-year partnership that seeks to build high-performing primary care systems in Ontario, including defining and measuring team functioning, performance, and collaboration. This research will help to inform the definition and measures for evaluating effective primary care teams. These findings will help to support contract modernization and quality improvements of team-based primary care in Ontario in collaboration with our members, the Ministry of Health, and Ontario Health. AFHTO is committed to updating, engaging with and soliciting feedback from its members on a regular basis as contract modernization progresses.

### Advancing Health System Transformation

AFHTO conducted a survey of its members to inform the development of Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and the designation requirements of Ontario Health Teams (OHTs). The survey results informed the feedback AFHTO shared with the Ministry of Health and on the proposed regulations under the *Connecting Care Act, 2019*. AFHTO continues to work closely with the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health to support the development of OHT maturation criteria.

# Team-Based Care

## MAKING IT A REALITY FOR ALL

On October 25, 2023, AFHTO's members and partners came together at our annual conference to celebrate the work of the past year, showcase important work underway, and to discuss the future of care.

This was our second in-person conference since the pandemic started, and it provided learnings and networking opportunities for those who work in and with team-based primary care.

The conference was a timely opportunity to connect with colleagues and to talk about how we can collectively create the conditions to make team-based primary care a reality for all Ontarians.

Sessions included:

- A **fireside chat** with representatives from Ontario Health, Georgina NPLC, and University of Toronto, moderated by AFHTO board member Rakib Mohammed.
- An **opening plenary** by Dr. Tara Kiran and Mike Suta, who outlined OurCare's research and public engagement that culminated in the creation of a standard of primary care in Canada.
- Recognition of this year's **Bright Lights Awards winners** by AFHTO's outgoing president Sara Dalo and Ontario Health's Dr. Sacha Bhatia.
- A **closing plenary** with bestselling author Nina Spencer, who outlined five everyday personal practices to elevate team-based success.

We thank all who joined in person and those who tuned in virtually to see the sessions.

We look forward to another year of collaboration as we support our members, continue our advocacy, and work together to create a strong healthcare system built on team-based primary care.

### Your Voice Matters: Improving the Conference Experience

In response to valuable feedback from our members, we have made several key improvements to our annual conference, including:

- Returning to a two-day format, with the second day concluding earlier to better accommodate travel plans.
- Increasing opportunities for networking, including the popular *Let's Talk About* sessions, allowing members to meet, mingle and share insights on shared topics of interest.
- More promotion for our incredible Bright Lights Awards nominees, including as a *Let's Talk About* session.
- Exploring opportunities to lower hotel costs for our 2026 annual conference.

We extend our sincere thanks to all our members for your valuable feedback, which has been instrumental in shaping improvements to our 2024 conference.







## 2023 Bright Lights Awards Recipients

At this year's conference, AFHTO named the winners of our 12th annual Bright Lights Awards. Selected from dozens of nominees, the recipients have risen to the challenge in their communities and the broader healthcare system, improving access to primary care in Ontario through innovation, leadership and collaboration.

**Petawawa Centennial Family Health Team /** *Using a population-based approach to provide care to the community*

Petawawa Centennial Family Health Team created an innovative solution, **Integrated Virtual Care (IVC)**, to address the shortage of family physicians in the Renfrew County area. This hybrid model of care increased access to comprehensive, team-based primary care while improving equity.

**Georgian Bay Family Health Team /** *Embedding mental health and home care in primary care*

Georgian Bay Family Health Team developed and implemented a standardized, evidence-based pathway for child and youth depression and anxiety, **myDAWN (Depression, Anxiety, Wellness Navigation)**. myDAWN has helped to streamline services while improving coordination between service providers, ultimately providing better access to mental health and addictions support to young people across South Georgian Bay and beyond.

**Dufferin Area Family Health Team and North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services /** *Spotlight Award*

Dufferin Area FHT (DAFHT) joined forces with North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services (NPDCLS) to offer a clinic that helps patients with disabilities prepare their applications for the Ontario Disability Support Payment (ODSP), supporting them to **access disability support benefits**.

**Huron Shores Family Health Team /** *Optimizing teams' capacity and creating efficiencies*

Huron Shores Family Health Team serves a population with a large proportion of elderly patients. In reviewing the team's hospital discharge program, they identified a gap in access to a family physician and noticed numerous referrals to a social worker for grief. As a result, their nurse practitioner, nurse, and social worker joined forces and created a **Palliative Care Program**.

**Two Rivers and Grandview Medical Centre Family Health Teams /** *Organizing primary care to advance Ontario Health Teams*

Recognizing the need for quick access to mental health and addictions services in their community, Two Rivers and Grandview Medical Centre FHTs worked with their Ontario Health Team to realize an eight-week pilot for a **Community Mental Health & Addictions Clinic** at Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

Congratulations ✨  
 to all our  
 winners and  
 nominees! ✨



North York FHT Community Health and Information Fairs



Windsor FHT



Couchiching FHT



Toronto Western FHT



Prescott FHT Workplace Wellness Committee



Prince Edward FHT Community Clinic



# Looking Ahead

## AFHTO'S 2024-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

In early 2024, AFHTO launched a new strategic planning process.

This process began at a time of significant change, both within our organization and across our broader healthcare system.

Our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan is rooted in the input of our diverse membership, staff, partners, and health system leaders. We heard you – we can, and we will, do better. Better for our members, better for our partners, and better for Ontarians. This feedback is reflected and prioritized throughout our 2024-2027 strategic plan and centers around our shared purpose and vision.

### Our Purpose

To empower primary care teams to be at the centre of a connected, comprehensive and effective healthcare system.

### Our Vision

Equitable access to excellent team-based primary care for every person in Ontario.

AFHTO's strategic plan focuses on advancing our purpose and vision in three key areas over the next four years:

### Advocate

Lead health system and primary care transformation and be an essential partner for change.

### Support

Enable our members to provide equitable and integrated team-based primary care for more Ontarians.

### Governance & Operational Excellence

Achieve excellence in the governance and operations of AFHTO and our members to always demonstrate value.

By aligning our goals with the province's ongoing health system transformation, we are ensuring that AFHTO remains at the forefront of primary care improvement.

Looking ahead, executing our new strategic plan is at the heart of our work. We are excited to work with you to put this plan into action in the months and years to come.



International Agricultural Worker Program, Norfolk FHT | Integrate Your Care Podcast, hosted by Central Brampton FHT



Barrie and Community FHT Bone Health program



Mississauga Paediatric Care Clinic, Mississauga OHT



Enhancing senior wellbeing with virtual reality adventures, Parry Sound FHT



Health Care at Eva Rothwell Centre, Hamilton FHT, Greater Hamilton Health Network



# What's next for AFHTO

AFHTO IS READY FOR AN EXCITING AND TRANSFORMATIONAL PERIOD AHEAD.

With new leadership and an updated strategic direction, together with our partners AFHTO is ready to deliver results, shaping the future of team-based primary care in Ontario.

For our members, we know ongoing challenges persist, including the health human resource crisis. We remain steadfast in our advocacy efforts, as well as empowering our members to engage in grassroots advocacy, to close the wage gap and help to recruit and retain the staff needed to support and strengthen team-based primary care.

We are excited for what's to come and working with our members and partners we will relentlessly pursue our vision of achieving equitable access to excellent team-based primary care for every person in Ontario.



Palliative care navigation, Grey Bruce OHT



Dufferin Area FHT and SHIP (Services and Housing in the Province)

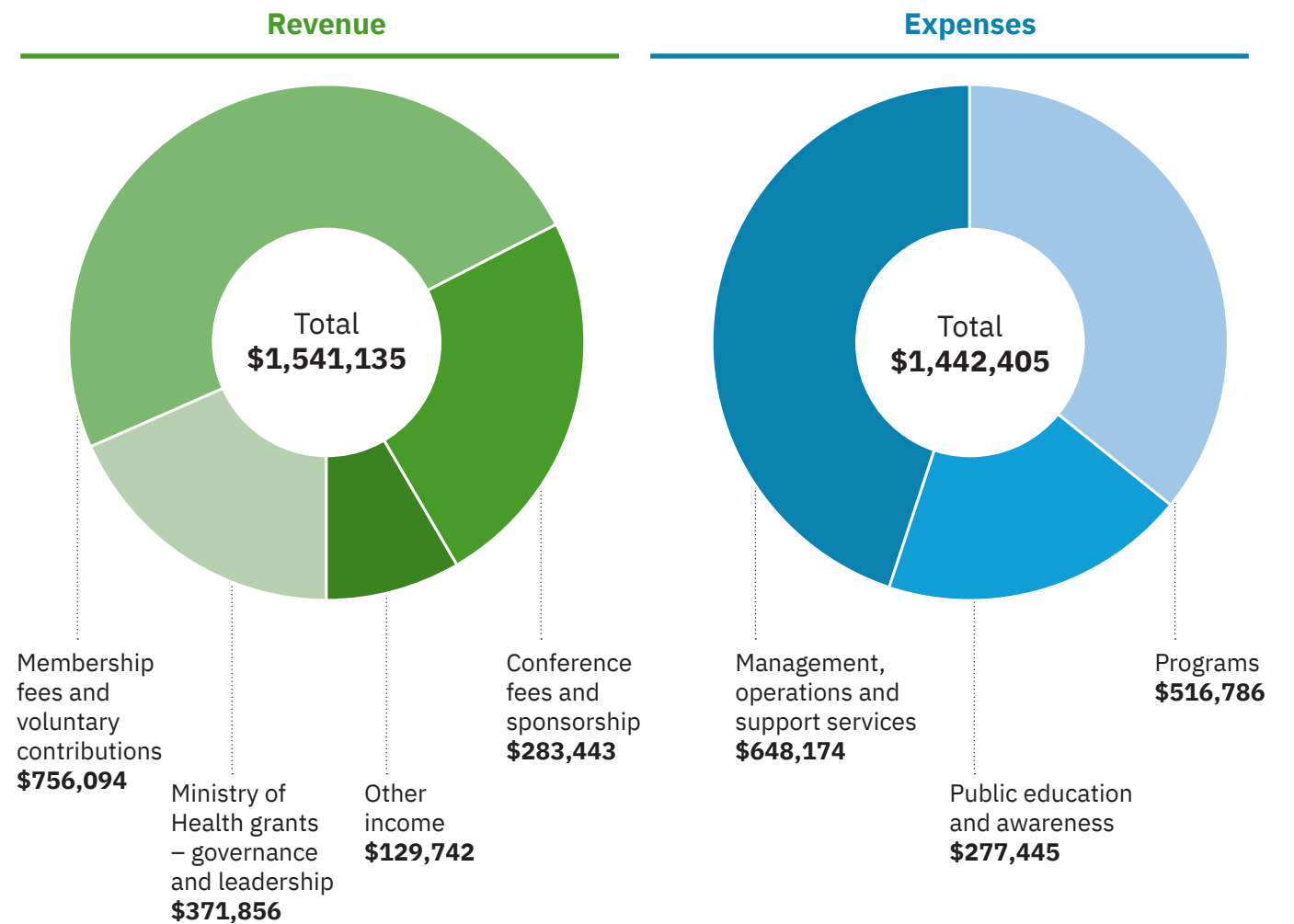
# Financial Report

2023-2024

We are pleased to report that AFHTO remains on solid financial footing.

Our careful stewardship of resources has enabled us to invest in key areas that support our mission while ensuring long-term sustainability.

We are committed to maintaining this strong financial position as we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead. Our financial health not only reflects our current success, but also lays a strong foundation for future growth and impact.



## Acknowledgements

Thank you to our members who were critical in supporting our work this year. Many of you took time to respond to consultations, support our advocacy efforts, participate in the development of our strategic plan, and contribute to communities of practice and working groups. We are inspired by your unwavering commitment and look forward to continuing to work together to ensure access to excellent team-based primary care for every person in Ontario.

### AFHTO Board of Directors



Dr. Sara Dalo



Pam Delgaty



Jillian Fernandez



Kaela Hilderley



Dr. Crystal Holly



Francine Janiuk



Jenny Lane



Rakib Mohammed



Paul Moreau



Diana Noel



Dr. Kevin Samson



Dr. Adam Steacie

### AFHTO Staff



**Mike McMahon**, Interim CEO; **Jennifer Hyde**, Executive Assistant and Office Administrator; **Alexander Christy**, Operations and Office Administrator; **Paula Myers**, Manager, Membership Engagement and Communications; **Gabriel Korth**, Project Coordinator; **Michael Scarpitti**, Director, Strategic Communications and Government Relations.

The **Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario** (AFHTO) is a not-for-profit association representing Ontario's interprofessional primary health care teams.

Team-based primary care is composed of family doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, dietitians, social workers, pharmacists and other health care providers who work together to provide seamless and connected care to patients.

AFHTO's 190 member organizations represent over 2,400 interprofessional health care providers and are affiliated with over 2,000 family physicians. Our members operate in every region of the province, providing primary care services and supports to more than 3.5 million Ontarians through every step and stage of life.

AFHTO envisions a health care system where every Ontarian will have access to equitable, high-quality, comprehensive, cost effective, integrated team-based primary care, leading to better health outcomes for patients and the communities in which they live, while reducing the burden on hospitals and emergency departments across the province.






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