



Community-centred primary health care

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Ontario Federation of Community
Mental Health and Addiction Programs

Sharing Resources, Exploring Common Issues

January 19, 2009

Minister Dwight Duncan
Ministry of Finance
7th Floor, Frost Building South
7 Queen's Park Crescent
Toronto ON M7A 1Y7

Minister George Smitherman
Minister of Energy & Infrastructure
4th Floor, Hearst Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 2E1

Minister David Caplan
Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care
10th Floor Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 2C4

Minister Deb Matthews
Ministry of Children & Youth Services, and
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues
14th Floor - 56 Wellesley St W.
Toronto ON M5S2S3

Dear Ministers:

Re: Community Hub Infrastructure Fund

The Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC), the Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA), and the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs (OFCMHAP) propose to work with the Government of Ontario to expand existing infrastructure initiatives through the establishment of a **Community Hub Infrastructure Fund** as a response to the economic challenges facing Ontario. We believe such an initiative would help drive progress on the priorities of the Government including: quality health care for families and a strong economy.

Our provincial associations are mindful of the slowing economy in Ontario – a consequence of a worsening global economic situation – and the resulting impact on provincial government revenues. Every day we see the effects of job loss and anxiety over financial security in the communities in which we work. We understand the necessity of fiscal prudence, as do our member organizations in their day-to-day operations. We offer this suggestion on the basis that it builds on the Government's proposed economic interventions, is financially reasonable, persuasively rational, and effectively leverages resources to address multiple government policies and priorities.

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More than just addressing the urgent need for economic stimulus in a time of financial crisis, we believe the proposed initiative will significantly benefit progress on other important Government priorities including:

- The wait-times initiative
- Improved access to quality family health care
- The government's anti-poverty initiative (*Breaking the Cycle*),
- The need to support vulnerable populations, including those with mental health issues, by increasing access to housing, employment supports and community spaces
- The mandate of the Local Health Integration Networks to provide integrated health services
- The Aging at Home Strategy
- The recommendations of the government commissioned *Roots of Violence* report

We envision a fund which will build community hubs offering primary care, employment supports, recreation facilities, Early Years, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, mental health and addictions programming, services that target vulnerable populations and community support services for seniors and persons with disabilities. These Hubs would be located in communities across the province bringing services directly to people where they're needed most.

Far from 'make-work' projects, *carefully-chosen* infrastructure projects would open up multiple opportunities for synergy at the community level. *Breaking the Cycle* and *The Roots of Violence Report* repeat and affirm recommendations from other reports for local strategies that focus on community hubs that bring together any number of health and social service agencies and provider groups with the shared objective of building healthier, sustainable communities.

What sorts of initiatives would such a Fund support? What to build? To house what? Located where? The answers to these questions would be provided by those closest to the need – and in synchronicity with the Government's own priorities. Depending on the makeup of the neighbourhood or community, the hub might be located at or near schools, as part of new or existing community health centres or as additions to already-existing community centres, recreation centres or supportive housing complexes .

In some communities, that might mean a Hub focused on school readiness, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, After-school Programs, Early Years, Healthy Babies: Healthy Children, Mental Health and Addictions Strategies focused on low-income youth with mild to severe mental health and/or addictions. In other communities it could be specialized partnerships between Community Health Centres (CHCs) with services for seniors and persons with disabilities – both growing populations putting increasing demands on the health care system. With many CHCs and Aboriginal Health Access Centres (AHACs) either building or in need of upgrades and expansion, there is a golden opportunity for cost-saving creativity, synergies, and integration of services.

As a first step we encourage the Government to use the **Community Hub Infrastructure Fund** to leverage the already approved Community Health Centres projects to support partnerships with other community providers such as seniors services, mental health and addiction programs, supportive and affordable housing programs and others to create community hubs. These existing projects provide a one-time opportunity to quickly implement projects which will provide lasting benefit as well as supporting current government directions .

We urge you to place this initiative at the centre of your shared plans for economic stimulation, poverty reduction and healthcare improvement. This fund will put tax dollars to work in those areas that produce the greatest return on our collective investment. A **Community Hub Infrastructure Fund** will build a better Ontario while helping transform health care and make services available to some of our most vulnerable populations.

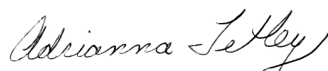
A **Community Hub Infrastructure Fund** will draw on local health and social service providers, boards of education, municipal governments, local small and mid-sized construction companies, and Local Health Integration Networks to build partnerships which will stimulate local economies. Ontario's economic situation makes the 2009 Ontario Budget critically important. It also offers a unique opportunity to trigger critical shifts in community health delivery which will enable greater effectiveness and ensure sustainability of the health system itself.

That is why we believe a Community Hub Infrastructure Fund will provide the Ontario Government with a legacy that will yield substantial benefits in the form of strong, collaborative multi-sectoral initiatives, weaving the fabric of community health and social services. This would encourage a seamless approach based on prevention, disease management and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations among us.

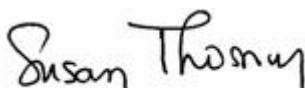
Our three associations, working across the province, commit to putting our full resources behind supporting the Government of Ontario through these difficult times. Our associations represent a broad spectrum of community health services. We support many of the same individuals and have a common vision for the advancement of government priorities.

In the interests of a fuller discussion of this proposal, we would be delighted to meet with each of you at your earliest convenience. We will follow up shortly with your offices regarding your availability.

Sincerely,



Adrianna Tetley
Association of Ontario Health
Centres



Susan Thorning
Ontario Community Support
Association



David Kelly
Ontario Federation of
Community Mental Health and
Addictions Programs

cc:

Peter Wilkinson, Chief of Staff, Office of the Premier

David Pryce, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Finance

Jennifer Morris, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure

Heather Mack, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

The Honourable Dr Alvin Curling and the Honourable Roy McMurtry, Q.C., co-chairs, Review of the Roots of Youth Violence

Local Health Integration Networks Chief Executive Officers and Board Chairs

We are:

- **The Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC)** supports the providers of Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres and Community Family Health Teams. These community-governed primary health care organisations offer comprehensive primary health care and health promotion with a focus on the social determinants of health in over 150 diverse communities throughout Ontario.
- **The Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA)** supports the providers of community-based not-for-profit health and social service agencies. This includes 25,000 staff and 100,000 volunteers of community based agencies in all parts of the province that support individuals to remain in their own homes in spite of disability, illness or limitation due to aging.
- **The Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs (OFCMHAP)** brings together community mental health and addiction services in the province to help members provide effective, high-quality services through information sharing, education, advocacy and unified effort. The Association conducts educational and other activities that contribute to the advancement of the capacity of community mental health and addiction organizations to deliver quality services.