



Addictions &
Mental Health
Ontario

Dépendances &
santé mentale
d'Ontario



Children's Mental Health Ontario
Santé mentale pour enfants Ontario



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health,
College Park 5th Floor,
777 Bay Street,
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Hon. Michael Tibollo
Associate Minister,
Mental Health and Addictions,
Whitney Block, 1st Floor, Rm 1618,
99 Wellesley Street West,
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

April 8, 2020

Dear Minister Elliott and Associate Minister Tibollo,

On behalf of Ontario's community mental health and addictions sector, we are writing to you today as a follow up to our letters dated March 23 and March 24, 2020.

We thank you for your recognition and inclusion of mental health and addictions services as essential businesses that must continue to operate through this pandemic.

We also acknowledge last week's investment of \$12M in COVID-19 support for mental health and addiction, approximately half of which you have indicated will go to existing programs to support their efforts to continue delivering essential, front-line supports and services to some of our province's most vulnerable. As you will see below, we are urging you to increase this investment, consistent with support that has been provided to other parts of the health care system that are dealing with the impact of this crisis, such as long-term care, home and community care, and primary care.

As we work on a daily basis to support our members, their clients and the government in a successful response to this historic situation, we are increasingly confused and concerned about the lack of action in response to very specific requests we have made. These requests are consistent with measures being taken in all other parts of the health care system and would enable us to manage risk and continue service through this pandemic. Specifically, we urge you to act on the following three requests:

- 1) Extend the temporary order allowing hospitals increased employment-related flexibility to all community-based mental health and addictions health service providers in Ontario in accordance with *the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.**

Granting these powers to the community-based mental health and addictions sector would allow our members to take appropriate measures to support the mental health and addictions needs of Ontarians during these challenging times. By operating under the same order, our members are better able to respond to the COVID-19 crisis as effectively and efficiently as possible while helping to maintain the mental health and safety of

Ontarians. This power has already been granted to the Hospitals, Long-Term Care facilities, and the Developmental Services sectors.

- 2) **The inclusion of our guidance materials entitled *COVID-19: Guidance: Mental Health and Addiction Services in Residential Settings* on [the Ministry of Health's Emergency Operation Centre website](#) as a resource for the community mental health and addictions sector.**

Our guidance documents, put together under the leadership of our associations at the suggestion of the Ontario Health Centre of Excellence, are an invaluable resource for community-based mental health and addictions residential service organizations and will support them in their ongoing response to the pandemic. Providers are asking for these resources. The government's expectation that providers will read through the dozens of other guidance documents for other sectors to glean what is applicable to them is simply not a productive use of the sector's time in the midst of this crisis.

- 3) **Additional investments to support children, youth and adults, including those receiving mental health and addictions care in a residential setting.** We understand that approximately half, or \$6.5 million, of the \$12 million announced last week will be flowed to the sector to support emergency efforts to keep services open. With over 20,000 beds (this includes supportive housing, high support housing, safe beds, residential addiction treatment and live-in treatment for child and youth mental health) across the MH&A lifespan community that would amount to \$325 per bed. There are additional intensive services that must continue to be provided face to face, and require additional supports to do so. We are asking for transparency in how decisions are being made regarding COVID-19 emergency funding, because simply put we are very concerned that mental health and addiction is falling behind in terms of priority.

For instance:

- a. In the fiscal update and COVID-19 response plan, the government announced **\$935M for acute care sector, \$235M for the long-term care sector, \$160M in new public health funding, \$170M in funding for the community and home care sectors and Telehealth Ontario, \$80M in funding for ambulance and paramedic services and \$70M in funding to support retirement homes.**
- b. The Ontario government announced an **additional \$40 million** on April 4, 2020, to support organizations that provide **residential services for children and youth, people with developmental disabilities and emergency shelters for women and families fleeing domestic violence.**

Our sector identified that \$100 million in new funding was needed to effectively respond to the COVID-19 crisis. There has been substantial action and response in other parts of the health care sector. We are asking for your attention to address this issue of parity and equity for the clients, many of whom are extremely vulnerable, in maintaining access to services that ultimately keep them out of the acute care sector

Providing additional funds for our sector is critical in supporting Ontario's most vulnerable populations facing mental health and addictions issues. It will assist in covering the costs

of additional staffing, providing personal protective equipment and supporting physical distancing to ensure the health and safety of both our members and clients.

As always, we are committed to continuing to work collaboratively with government and partners across the health and social services system to deliver a robust response to COVID-19 that ensures our most vulnerable Ontarians and their mental health continue to be supported.

Please feel free to contact us directly through Camille Quenneville, CEO of Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, by email at cquenneville@ontario.cmha.ca or by phone at 647-449-8055 should you have any questions, comments or wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Spafford, CEO, Addictions and Mental Health Ontario



Kim Moran, CEO, Children's Mental Health Ontario



Camille Quenneville, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario

CC Allan MacDermid, Chief of Staff, Associate Minister Tibollo's Office
Ragaven Sabaratnam, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Mental Health and Addiction Programs Branch, Ministry of Health
Heather Watt, Chief of Staff, Minister Elliott's Office