



March 24, 2020

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Elliott, Minister Tibollo, Minister Phillips and Minister Bethlenfalvy:

On behalf of Ontario's mental health and addictions sector, we urge you to include a **\$100 million one-time COVID-19 emergency response package for mental health and addictions** in the fiscal and economic update tomorrow.

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

Our members are doing their part to serve their communities during this crisis, but providers are already seeing a significant uptick in demand for services and our organizations need to put in additional health and safety measures to ensure they are keeping staff and clients safe. For the mental health and addictions sector to continue to provide the often life-saving treatment and services Ontarians need, a one-time response package is needed.

**This one-time emergency response fund, representing 2.5% of the sector wide budget**, would enable providers the flexibility to invest in critical emergency response areas for children, youth and adult mental health and addiction, such as:

- Redeploying additional clinical workers to cover staff shortages, fill critical service gaps, implement innovative business models and add capacity in infection control (this could include staff to do screening of clients and patients as well as additional security officers)
- Expansion of technology and digital solutions to continue to provide high-quality, confidential services such as counselling and therapy by phone or virtually (i.e. purchasing phones or laptops to enable virtual therapy, providing phone-minutes or devices to clients)
- Improved navigation so Ontarians and their families can easily find the help they need
- Access to PPE and other cleaning products to protect staff and clients, prioritizing residential programs, live-in treatment, supportive housing and intensive services that require face-to-face treatment

In addition, it is essential that providers are given the flexibility to roll-over any potential surpluses from the 2019/2020 fiscal year, and that existing base funding levels are sustained in 2020/2021.

Health Canada, using conservative data based on SARS, estimates that over 11 million Canadians will experience increased levels of stress during the COVID-19 outbreak, and over 2 million Canadians will show signs of traumatic stress. Before the onset of COVID-19, Ontarians already were facing extremely long wait lists and wait times to access mental health and addictions services. The one-time emergency response fund for mental health and addictions programs will enable to sector to better support Ontarians and their well-being immediately, as well as help prevent additional pressures on our hospitals so they can focus their efforts where they are most needed.

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.



Sincerely,

Kim Moran, CEO, Children's Mental Health Ontario

Adrienne Spafford, CEO, Addictions and Mental Health Ontario

Camille Quenneville, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario

cc. Mark Lawson, Premier's Office  
Dan Miles, Premier's Office  
Rana Shamoon, Director, Health Policy, Office of the Premier  
Laurel Brazill, Director of Stakeholder Relations, Minister of Health  
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Kara Johnson, Director, Stakeholder Relations and Operations, Associate Minister of  
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Andrew Sidnell, Chief of Staff, Minister of Finance  
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Patrick Mitchell, Director, Ministry of Health  
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