



For residents who are uninsured, Ontario needs to hit pause on current changes and develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce illnesses and costs across the health system

TORONTO – March 29, 2023 -- During the pandemic, the Ontario government and Ministry of Health recognized the importance of creating a stopgap to ensure that everyone, regardless of whether they had an OHIP card or not, could access the vital health services they needed. This was swift and prudent judgement that saved lives, helped reduce the spread of COVID-19, and allowed our health system to focus on helping people who needed help.

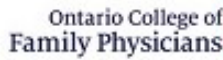
The discontinuation of funding for the uninsured services program for hospitals will widen the gap in accessing health care services in Ontario. We know that the loss of these services will have a disproportionate impact on the health of migrants, including foreign workers, expectant parents and their children, people with multiple chronic conditions, racialized people, people experiencing homelessness and people who've faced trauma from abuse, war and poverty, among others.

Alongside the Ontario Medical Association, we are calling for a temporary six-month extension to the existing program until a coordinated strategy can be developed and put into place taking into consideration the full spectrum of care.

To minimize those health impacts for people and our health system, together, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic Association, Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, the Alliance for Healthier Communities, the Association of Ontario Midwives and the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario are calling on the Government of Ontario to work with health system partners to develop a provincial strategy for uninsured people in the province to ensure they have access to the full spectrum of care that they require to meet their health needs.

To begin to support uninsured people better and achieve better health outcomes while reducing costs, Ontario first needs to:

- Ensure a system-wide and uniform strategy that allows uninsured people living in Ontario to have access to all healthcare they need, from acute care and diagnostics, to specialist care, including accountable funding for hospital stay costs to ensure people are not saddled with large impossible to pay bills, while ensuring hospitals are compensated for those stays
- Immediately revoke the three-month wait period for a health card – this move will immediately free up resources, ensure people can get timely access to care, and remove a barrier that causes people to delay getting care, and reduce wait lists in our health system.



- Support primary health care providers to continue delivering primary and preventative care that will slow or stop people from getting sick to begin with, and ensure our health system is sustainable for all.
- Further invest in and support organizations and providers who help act as navigation and accountability points for uninsured people and the health system. Community Health Centres (CHCs), Indigenous Primary Health Care Organizations (IPHCOs), Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics (NPLCs), midwifery care, and other community providers have decades of experience serving marginalized uninsured populations from diverse communities, and can play a key role in a whole system solution that adequately resources different sectors to ensure uninsured people can access care.

The costs of not having a strategy to ensure care for the uninsured are way too high, for Ontario, for our health system, for people's health and lives.

We are encouraged by the current conversations among the public and in the media that are supportive of care for uninsured people in Ontario and finding solutions for our system.

We are ready to work with government to develop a strategy that will work to stabilize health services for uninsured people, and that will enable Ontario to be a beacon for the future, too, as we aim to welcome more people from around the world to live and work here.