

For Immediate Release
Friday, December 12, 2025

Peterborough Family Health Team Advocates for Urgent Investments in Primary Care Ahead of 2026 Ontario Budget

PETERBOROUGH, ON - Duff Sprague, CEO of the Peterborough Family Health Team (PFHT) appeared before the MPPs who sit on the Ontario government's pre-budget consultation committee on December 5, 2025. Sprague told the committee that while PFHT is appreciative that the government has announced significant investment into primary care teams, he says it is important to share with the committee the challenges that remain for Ontario's family health teams.

"Primary care providers, who work tirelessly on the front lines, have faced significant challenges over the past several years, including wage stagnation," said Sprague. "Without competitive compensation and supportive work environments, existing teams remain strained to their limits."

Sprague highlighted for the committee members several pressing issues:

Wage disparities:

Ministry of Health and Ontario Health employees have received retroactive wage increases of 3, 3.5 and 3 per cent respectively over the last three years, in addition to a one per cent increase already received for each of those years. FHT clinician salaries, after being frozen for over six years, received a 2.7 per cent increase, less than 25 per cent of what public service employees have received. An Ontario Community Health Compensation Study in 2023 found primary care positions are 15–40 per cent below market value.

Access to Care for Unattached Patients:

PFHT runs two health clinics where physicians and nurse practitioners provide in person same-day or next-day care to those area residents without a family physician or nurse practitioner. The clinics have served close to 6,000 unattached patients, a number growing by approximately 2,500 each year. PFHT has only been able to achieve this through the efforts of physicians practicing under Fee for Service, drawing back recently retired physicians and those seeking diversity in practice.

Budget Constraints:

Budget flexibility is severely limited. With a nearly \$12 million budget, PFHT must receive written approval from Ontario Health to move more than \$10,000 across functional centres. In other words, written approval is needed from this government agency to manage less than 0.0008 per cent of its budget without this permission.

PFHT also noted that while Ministry of Health and Ontario Health employees have benefited from wage increases and the reduced costs due to working from home, PFHT staff have continued to perform essential, on-site work under stressful and demanding conditions. In addition to frozen wages they have absorbed both the risks presented throughout the COVID

epidemic and the costs associated with on site work such as transportation and the need for after-school programs for their children.

To stabilize and strengthen primary care, PFHT called on the Ontario government to:

1. Invest in competitive compensation to attract new healthcare graduates and retain experienced staff.
2. Expand team-based care to ensure robust support for family physicians and their patients across physical, mental and socioeconomic health needs.
3. Reduce administrative burdens by reviewing reporting requirements and other mandates imposed by Ontario Health.
4. Ensure sustainable funding by increasing base budgets to meet inflationary pressures and growing demand.

Sprague noted that funding more primary care teams and medical schools dedicated to family medicine will not solve the crisis in healthcare if these underlying issues remain unaddressed. Without competitive compensation and supportive work environments, new graduates will continue to gravitate toward other specialties or roles outside primary care.

“By aligning compensation for primary care professionals with the value they provide and ensuring fair recognition of their contributions, the healthcare system can build a stronger, more equitable foundation,” Sprague said. “This would not only improve retention and job satisfaction, but also enhance the quality of care provided to communities.”

-30-

Media Contact:

Sloane Himmel

Communications Officer | 705-749-1564 ext. 316 | sloane.himmel@peterboroughfht.com