



Association of Ontario Health Centres
Community-governed primary health care
Association des centres de santé de l'Ontario
Soins de santé primaires gérés par la communauté



The Ontario Primary Care Council

Federal Elections Statement

April 2015

Primary care must be the foundation of Canada's health system. The Ontario Primary Care Council (OPCC) provides leadership, through relationships, to advance person-centred primary care. The Ontario Primary Care Council is a co-ordinated committee composed of the following organizations:

- Association of Family Health Teams Ontario
- Association of Ontario Health Centres
- Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario
- The Ontario College of Family Physicians
- Ontario Medical Association
- Ontario Pharmacist's Association
- Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

The OPCC proactively engages government and its agencies for consultation on issues related to primary care. The Council strives for a unified voice through collective response.

Canadians will be heading to the polls to elect their next federal government in October 2015. Polls are identifying health care as being at the top of the agenda for Canadian voters.ⁱ In order to strengthen Medicare and deliver on the expectations of Canadians for their health system, a strong foundation is needed in primary care. Primary care can be defined as "...that level of a health service system that provides entry into the system for all new needs and problems, provides person-focused (not disease-oriented) care over time, provides care for all but very uncommon or unusual conditions, and co-ordinates or integrates care provided elsewhere by others."ⁱⁱ Timely and comprehensive access to primary care is a hallmark of a high performing health system



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The OPCC places care coordination and system navigation as core functions of primary care and it is the role of primary care providers to lead care coordination, system navigation, and access to appropriate programs or services. This will lead to timely access, seamless transitions for patients and families, reduce duplication, increase quality of care and outcomes, and improve health system cost-effectiveness.

Utilizing primary care to its full potential has the power to expand Medicare into its next phase of implementation. Imagine a person-centred health system:

- where primary care can help Canadians remain well and avoid hospitals;
- that provides all Canadians with a single point of contact, through their primary care provider, to help them navigate through programs and services;
- where primary care is timely, equitable, and accessible to everyone, no matter who they are or where they live.
- that provides Canadians with access to interprofessional teams practising to their full potential and expanded scope;
- where clinical practice is evidence-based.

Achieving this vision requires leadership both at the federal and provincial levels. The strength of Canada's health system is dependent on the strength of its primary care sector. **Therefore, the Ontario Primary Care Council urges all political parties to make primary care a priority in the 2015 Federal Election, and to focus on building capacity within the primary care setting to advance the health and wellness of Canadians.** One way of doing so is by ensuring that federal transfer payments acknowledge the need for appropriate resources in the primary care setting.

ⁱ <http://abacusdata.ca/agenda-canadian-voters/>

ⁱⁱ Starfield, B. (1998) *Primary Care: balancing health needs, services and technology*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, pp 8-9.