



Ontario Public Health Association
l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
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Presentation to the Ontario Minister of Finance

OPHA's Pre-Budget Submission

January 26, 2018

Good afternoon and thank you for taking the time to hear from the Ontario Public Health Association. My comments are focussed on three areas that support your government's commitment to creating fairness and opportunity.

First, is it fair that we are seeing increasing rates of chronic diseases that could be avoided by greater investment in prevention? More than half of Ontarians over 12 suffer from at least one chronic conditionⁱ; those of lower income have higher rates of chronic diseasesⁱⁱ like heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes.

Recently, Ontario's Auditor General underlined the critical role your government can play in reversing this trend by investing in chronic disease preventionⁱⁱⁱ. For example, you could launch the next phase of Smoke Free Ontario, the long awaited provincial alcohol strategy, and expand activities to promote healthy eating and physical activity. An increase of \$270 million each year could make a big difference. That's a mere 0.5% of the \$54 billion that's spent annually primarily on care and treatment rather than keeping people well.

We know that 22% of the province's spending has been linked to smoking, alcohol consumption, poor diet, and physical inactivity; that's \$90 billion in health-care costs over nine yearsⁱⁱⁱ. A 2016 study by Dr. Manuel showed health care savings of \$4.9 billion over ten years from changes in health behaviours. He concluded that more savings can be had through investing in prevention and reducing social inequity^{iv}.

Secondly, is it fair that not everyone in our province is enjoying the same opportunities to be healthy? To have equal access to recreation, clean air and water, green spaces and the conditions needed for good health. We are concerned about growing inequities in our communities and believe they are avoidable as well as unjust and unfair.

In 2015, there were over 60,000 dental emergency hospital visits – much of this could be avoided^v. Many need to wait until they need emergency treatment because they can't afford to see a dentist. An expanded publically funded dental care program for those of low income could solve this.

It's troubling that 12.5 % of Ontarians do not have adequate income to purchase

the quantity and quality of food to lead a healthy life^{vi}. While we are encouraged by your government's commitment to a basic income pilot, reforming income security, increasing the minimum wage and expanding affordable childcare and housing, more needs to be done.

Lastly, we fear that provincial funding for public health and health promotion is being eroded and prevention is undervalued. We urge you to use a preventative health lens as you make choices across government – be it for infrastructure, transportation, education or climate change. Choosing investments that promote health-in-all policies can contribute to Ontarians' health and wellbeing and a more sustainable health care system.

OPHA shares your Government's commitment to building a prosperous, fairer and healthier Ontario and welcomes the opportunity to work together to achieve this.

References

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About OPHA

Created in 1949, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that brings together a broad spectrum of groups and individuals concerned about people's health. OPHA's members come from various backgrounds and sectors - from the various disciplines in public health, health care, academic, non-profit to the private sector. They are united by OPHA's mission of providing leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthening the impact of people, who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. This mission is achieved through professional development, information and analysis on issues effecting community and public health, access to multidisciplinary networks, advocacy on health public policy and the provision of expertise and consultation. OPHA members have been leading change in their communities on a wide range of issues - tobacco control, poverty reduction, diabetes prevention, increased access to oral health care, immunization, supporting children and families, food security, climate change and designing walkable communities, among others. www.opha.on.ca @OPHA_Ontario