



Ontario Public Health Association

l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario

Established/Établi 1949

## **Presentation to the Ontario Minister of Finance**

***OPHA's Pre-Budget Statement***

**January 12, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association.

It's been said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

There is now compelling evidence that shows this saying to be true - prevention is paying off and there's more savings to be had. We offer the following three ideas for doing so:

1. Introduce Health in all Policies Legislation
2. Maintain and strengthen existing investments in prevention, health protection and promotion and our public and community health system
3. Introduce a Basic Income Guarantee (BIG)

Less than three percent of Ontario's \$50B health budget is being spent on upstream approaches; Ontario is not reaping the full benefits.

We're stuck in a vicious circle of treating health and social problems that can be prevented rather than creating a more equitable, healthier and prosperous society.

### **1. Health in All Policies Legislation**

A Health in all Policies Legislation offers an effective and efficient strategy for achieving this. As most of the causes of health lie outside the health care system, each government ministry would systematically assess the impact on health as they develop, implement and evaluate their policies, programs and investments. We point to the Province of Quebec's legislation requiring health impact assessments and actions in other jurisdictions, e.g. Finland, as examples that Ontario could adapt.

Your government has already taken some initial steps on this path and having legislation would reap further benefits and health care cost savings.

For example, we applaud your recent announcement of a cross-government alcohol strategy to mitigate and address the harms that will result from making the sale of alcohol more accessible

### **2. Maintain and Strengthen Existing Investments**

Your government's upcoming legislative agenda offers other opportunities for a whole of government approach in addressing impacts upon health outside the health system, from changes to land use planning, climate change, pensions, affordable housing to child care.

As you formulate Budget 2016, ensure that existing investments in prevention are not further eroded. Our public and community health system are leveraging their community partners to prevent smoking, obesity, diabetes, injury and support healthy child development, oral health and food security and control infectious diseases and health hazards and influence the determinants of health. With the shifting of public health budgets to LHINS, it will be critical that these resources and the influence of public health are not eroded as has happened in some other provinces. Ontario needs to move beyond high cost clinical, treatment approaches. Population health thinking and public health leadership is needed more than ever.

### **3. Introduce a Basic Income Guarantee (BIG)**

Lastly, our association is distressed by growing economic disparities. Those who are least advantaged tend to have the poorest health. A Basic Income Guarantee - BIG can provide a more streamlined way to tackle the key factor influencing health. This BIG idea, when tested in Manitoba, was shown to not only improve health but reduce hospital visits, increase employment options and school completion rates.

For over 66 years, our non-profit organization has been committed to promoting the health and well-being of Ontarians. OPHA welcomes the opportunity to work with your government to achieve this. Thank you for your consideration.

Pegeen Walsh  
Executive Director, OPHA

## **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, healthy eating and nutrition, climate change and designing walkable communities, among others.*

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