

The Ontario Association of Public Health Nursing Leaders

Leading the Way for Public Health Nursing

February 28, 2019

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Dear Minister Elliott

On behalf of the Ontario Association of Public Health Nursing Leaders (OPHNL), I would like to congratulate and commend your government on making mental health a priority for the Ontario government. There is no health without mental health. Given the important nature of this work, our Association is extending its assistance in addressing this issue to you and our provincial government.

OPHNL represents public health nursing leaders across the province, striving to promote and protect the health of Ontarians through excellence in public health nursing leadership. As nurses, we work directly with people in need and understand the importance that mental health plays in not only in an individual's health, but in the health of our families, workplaces, cities, towns and rural communities across Ontario.

Poor mental health has been identified as a risk factor for substance use problems. Overall, the impact of mental illness, mental health, and addictions in Ontario on life expectancy, quality of life, and health care utilization is more than 1.5 times that of all cancers and more than 7 times that of all infectious diseases. Positive levels of mental health and resilience are protective factors for physical health, recovery from physical illness, and for reducing harmful behaviours such as problematic use of substances. In this regard, promotion, protection, and restoration of mental health should be considered crucial concerns for all Ontarians. Public health and Public Health Nurses have a vital role to play in these areas.

As public health nursing leaders, we are prepared and well positioned to engage in mental health promotion and protection efforts with community members and our partners across sectors (including community agencies, municipalities, schools and health care providers) to improve the psychological wellbeing of our citizens and to address addictions and other mental health issues in our communities.

We welcome the opportunity to engage with you and your government as we collectively move forward to address mental health and addictions. It is through collaborative upstream interventions that promote resiliency, positive mental health and well-being in the early years and across the lifespan that will ultimately make a difference for all Ontarians.

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
February 28, 2019

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Respectfully,



Hamida Bhimani
President
Ontario Association of Public Health Nursing Leaders

c.c Ms. Helen Angus; Deputy Minister
c.c. Dr. David Williams; Chief Medical Officer of Health
c.c Dr. Michelle Acorn; Provincial Chief Nursing Officer
c.c Mr. Tim Hadwen; Assistant Deputy Minister, Community, Mental Health and Addictions

