



2016 PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS Executive Summary

Introduction

Health care spending in Ontario remains the largest government expenditure. With this in mind, Health Nexus is putting forward pre-budget advice that aims to build on the government's commitment to ensuring health system sustainability through a focus on health promotion and disease prevention.

Specifically, we are suggesting, that the government:

1. Continue to build on its work to promote greater collaboration across Ministries and build upon these initiatives to create a formal and sustained government-wide Health in All Policies (HiAP). A HiAP approach will foster greater collaboration across sectors to address the social determinants of health and improve health equity.
2. Maintain and strengthen its investment in health promotion. Broadly speaking, this government should invest in programs that represent an upstream approach to addressing Ontario's health needs, including programs aimed at supporting maternal health and early childhood development.
3. Leverage the expertise of Ontario's [Health Promotion Resource Centres](#) as it works to strengthen patient-centred health care in Ontario.

Health in All Policies

Health equity within Ontario depends upon a Health in All Policies approach. The adoption of a Health in All Policies approach would create mechanisms to foster greater multisector collaboration and systemically address the health implications of policy decisions across different sectors that influence health.

In 2015, the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) Technical Report on *Trends in Income-Related Health Inequities* offered a snapshot of the health care cost of failing to address the social determinants of health.

CIHI estimates that if Canadians in the bottom income levels experienced the same indicator rate as those in the highest income level, there would be:

- 4,200 fewer small for gestational age births in 2011;
- 580,700 fewer women with obesity in 2013;
- 300 fewer infant deaths in 2011;
- 1,656,400 fewer Canadians smoking in 2013; and

- 673,700 fewer Canadians living with diabetes in 2013.¹

Maintain and strengthen investment in health promotion

With Ontario's rapidly growing and aging population, health care remains a key priority. Health promotion represents an "upstream" approach to addressing Ontario's health needs and ensuring health system sustainability.

Investing in health promotion and disease prevention makes good fiscal sense. Every dollar invested in promoting healthy eating and physical activity saves six dollars in the cost of caring for individuals with chronic disease.²

Specifically, Health Nexus wishes to see investments in:

1. Supporting Preconception and Prenatal Health

Health care costs in Ontario are disproportionately driven by "heavy users". Among children the top one per cent and five per cent of users account for 38 per cent and 59 per cent of expenditures respectively³.

Low birth weight/premature birth has been identified as one of the top five reasons for hospitalization among the top one per cent of users in children. The high cost of neonatal care suggests that interventions are best carried out "upstream" to address the various risk factors for premature birth, including poor maternal nutrition, obesity and stressful life events.

2. Early Childhood Development

According to Statistics Canada, using World Health Organization guidelines, close to one third of Canadians between the ages of five and 17 were classified as overweight or obese. Research has consistently demonstrated an increased risk of overweight or obese youth becoming overweight or obese adults.⁴ Unhealthy weights in adults have been linked to a wide variety of health concerns including increased risk of heart disease, cancer, strokes, psychosocial problems and type 2 diabetes.

The underlying causes for the growth in unhealthy weights among children are complex, including both biological and social factors. Addressing the root causes of childhood obesity requires a multisector approach and success depends on a substantial and sustained investment.

¹ November 2015 Canadian Institute for Health Information Technical Report: *Trends in Income-Related Health Inequities in Canada*

² Trust for America's Health. (2008). *Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments In Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities.*

³ Woodchis, W.P. et al. *A 3year study of high-cost users of health care.* Canadian Medical Association Journal. 2016

⁴ Singh, A.S., et al. *Tracking of childhood overweight into adulthood: a systematic review of literature.* Obesity Review. 2008. 9(5): 474-488.

Leveraging Ontario’s Health Promotion Resource Centres as part of “putting patients first”

According to the Senate Subcommittee on Population Health,⁵ only 25 per cent of the population’s health outcomes are attributable to the health care system.

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion recognizes the impact of influences outside of health care that effect on population health, and states that “the prerequisites and prospects for health cannot be ensured by the health sector alone.”

As the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care moves forward through the next phase of its plan to “put patients first,” it cannot address population and public health alone.

Ontario’s health promotion resource centres, including the [Best Start Resource Centre](#) and [HC Link](#), have the experience and expertise required build and nurture collaborative relationships across sectors; engage diverse cultural communities and marginalized populations; and increase local capacity to provide better care, closer to home. They are poised to work collaboratively across the many diverse sectors that impact on the health of all Ontarians.

Conclusion

Currently celebrating our 30th anniversary, Health Nexus is a bilingual leader in health promotion that supports individuals, organizations and communities build their capacity to implement health promotion strategies that address the broad determinants of health and enhance community well-being. Health Nexus is home to two of Ontario’s 14 health promotion resource centres; namely the Best Start Resource Centre and HC Link – a collaborative with Parent Action on Drugs and Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition. We remain committed to supporting the development of healthy, equitable and inclusive communities and we look forward to working with the government to achieve this.

⁵ Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, Final Report of Senate Subcommittee on Population Health, “A Healthy, Productive Canada: A Determinant of Health Approach,” June 2009