

The Honourable Tyler Shandro,
Minister of Health
Government of Alberta
health.minister@gov.ab.ca

August 21, 2020

Dear Minister Shandro,

As an Alberta resident and family physician, I have been proud to witness tremendous improvements in our province that inspired medical students and residents to become practicing physicians and provide quality primary care for the people of Alberta. When I became a residency program director at the University of Alberta more than a decade ago, application rates to family medicine were low. Medical students soon noticed the flexibility, complexity, and comprehensiveness of family practice. We, as teachers, supervisors and leaders worked in well-supported teams, with accessible resources and we could honestly say this is a fantastic specialty. It inspired our students and residents to join our teams and work in Alberta.

Through these and other efforts, over the past five years the percentage of Albertans with a regular health care provider (a family physician in vast majority of the cases) has increased from 80.5% to 85.1%. Innovative practices in family physician-led clinics saved the Alberta's health care system [\\$120M over ten years](#). These achievements were made possible by a collaborative approach that placed the health outcomes of patients first and foremost and sought to elevate the system performance by empowering professionals contributing to its success.

However, over the last several months, the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), and its provincial Chapter, the Alberta College of Family Physicians (ACFP) have witnessed a continued and sustained attack on family physicians and other specialists by the current Alberta government while making unprecedented unilateral cuts that will reduce the quality and accessibility of health care for the people of Alberta. We share the concerns voiced by our members and request that you return to negotiations with the Alberta Medical Association.

.../2

Alberta family physicians continue to feel devalued, attacked and concerned for their patients and for the future of their practices. Some physicians and recent graduates have resigned, left practice, or are planning to move elsewhere, not because of the negative financial impact of government decisions, but because of lack of trust and confidence in the Government of Alberta. Further deterioration of relationships between physicians and government can lead to ongoing departures of professionals who are crucial for an effective delivery of care across settings.

The CFPC stands with Alberta's patients and family physicians. As the voice of family medicine in Canada, we believe in quality health care for all and our members make a foundational contribution to the provision of such care. We would like to see ongoing implementation of the Patient's Medical Home vision in Alberta, where so much promise was demonstrated in the past through the work of family practices within Primary Care Networks. The evidence clearly demonstrates that having a family doctor improves health outcomes for patients, including better screening, less hospitalization, lower mortality and improved satisfaction and confidence.

It is essential that the Government of Alberta return to the negotiating table with the Alberta Medical Association in good faith and a spirit of collaboration. Ongoing fragmentation of care, instability and lack of communication is not acceptable. Alberta's family physicians must be recognized for the exceptional care they provide to their patients. The CFPC and ACFP are committed to support the quality of health care the people of Alberta deserve.

Sincerely,



Shirley Schipper, MD, CCFP, FCFP
President
College of Family Physicians of Canada

cc: The Honourable Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta
The Honourable Rachel Notley, Leader of the Opposition
Dr. Scott Mcleod, Registrar, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
Dr. Christine Molnar, President, Alberta Medical Association
Dr. Vishal Bhella, President, Alberta College of Family Physicians
Dr. Francine Lemire, Executive Director and CEO, College of Family Physicians of Canada