



November 8, 2021

Honourable Ministers Peter Bethlenfalvy and Christine Elliott,

We are writing to offer our strong support and thanks for your commitment in the 2021 Ontario Economic Update of \$8.1 million in 2021-22 to address increased demand for services to support specialized care for children and youth with eating disorders. In addition to the previously announced commitment of \$11 million for eating disorder services and supports in the *Roadmap to Wellness*, this new money will help to provide critically necessary care in response to the dramatic increase in eating disorders among children and youth.

As our colleagues at the Children's Health Coalition have noted, eating disorder emergency department visits at children's hospitals increased 1.5-2.6 times through the pandemic, with hospitalizations increasing 1.5-1.9 times. SickKids had to open a temporary second unit for eating disorders, and CHEO reported having 25 children admitted for eating disorders when they only had funding for six beds. Despite having the highest mortality rate of any mental health condition affecting children and youth, eating disorders often fall between the cracks of mental health and medicine, as they are complex biopsychosocial illnesses that do not fit neatly into the silos of mental or physical health. As such, they have been overlooked and underfunded for years and the status quo is no longer tenable.

This \$8.1 million for paediatric eating disorder supports will make a big difference to the health and well-being of Ontario's children and youth. While the pandemic has significantly contributed to a surge in paediatric eating disorders, scaled up and targeted funding was needed long before the pandemic, and timely, quality and accessible services and supports will be needed long after we have put the worst of the pandemic behind us. We therefore urge you to develop a long-term plan in collaboration with stakeholders and patient groups that will ensure paediatric eating disorders are appropriately prioritized and supported. At the centre of this plan must be permanent and targeted funding for hospital-based services and community-based paediatric eating disorder programs and supports.

Thank you,

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