



## RIGHT-SIZING ONTARIO'S PEDIATRIC HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: MAKE KIDS COUNT

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy  
Minister of Finance  
c/o Budget Secretariat Frost Building North, 3rd Floor  
95 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z1

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy:

As you have heard from families in your riding and beyond, and seen on your tours of health care facilities, Ontario has outgrown its pediatric health care system. That was true before the pandemic. It is certainly true this viral season. And it will continue to be true for years to come unless urgent action is taken.

You have the opportunity in your upcoming budget not only to add capacity to the system where it is needed now, but also to prevent a generation of children from experiencing significant long-term health problems because critical early intervention windows have been missed. You could invest now and save the province downstream costs by significant orders of magnitude. You could proudly say to the people of Ontario, 'our children matter and we're going to do right by them.'

You can do these things more easily because we have a plan. The [Make Kids Count Action Plan](#) and the updated costing proposal we have submitted to the Ministry of Health will tackle ballooning backlogs, break down barriers to care for the children and youth who need it now, and ensure that - in every corner of our province - our children's health and well-being is improved for the long-term. An integrated approach across settings and across physical, developmental and mental health services is necessary to solve both new and long-standing barriers to timely access to care.

Across the province, as of May 2022:

- Over 40,000 children were on ambulatory service waitlists across the children's hospitals
- Over 28,000 children were waiting for community-based mental health treatment
- Over 31,000 children were on diagnostic imaging waitlists across the children's hospitals
- Over 90,000 children were waiting for community- and school-based child development and rehabilitation care
- Over 10,000 children were on surgical waitlists across the children's hospitals

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH COALITION



Our plan lays out an integrated approach across care settings to address the physical, developmental, and mental health needs of Ontario’s kids. As the dedicated, specialized providers of children’s health care in the province, we are ready to deliver and be held accountable for the desired outcomes.

**Our proposal requests a total of \$371.5 million in fiscal year 2023/24, and a total of \$1.43 billion over the next 4 years.**

The immediate investment needed for fiscal year 2023/24 is detailed below:

Priority	Total request for Fiscal 2023/24
Safeguard <b>access to pediatric emergency care</b> by supporting innovative solutions to divert and alleviate pressures from pediatric emergency departments	\$17 M
Address long wait times and the backlogs in <b>surgeries, post-surgical inpatient rehabilitation, ambulatory services and procedures, and diagnostic imaging</b> , ensuring care within target wait times	\$179 M
Expand <b>community-based rehabilitation and development</b> resources to ensure children access services within an acceptable window of opportunity to maximize their potential and recovery	\$95 M
Augment capacity for <b>pediatric intensive care</b> to right-size the system and manage upcoming pressures	\$24 M
Add acute <b>mental health surge capacity</b> in hospitals and through hospital community partnerships for children/youth in crisis	\$22 M
Reduce the need for hospital care and ensure step-down care is promptly available by investing in <b>community-based child and youth mental health treatment</b> and innovative partnership models	\$35 M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$371.5 M</b>

While we recognize that there are a number of competing priorities across government, this investment in children’s health is a relatively small investment in comparison to the overall health budget, which will have a significant impact on their health and well-being. Putting our kids first

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now will save all taxpayers in the long run while also ensuring every young Ontarian can lead their best life.

More broadly, we commend the Premier and your government for the positive engagement with the federal government on the Canada Health Transfer. As demand on our health system increases, and particularly on children's health, we are encouraged by your willingness to meaningfully negotiate with the federal government, and would welcome targeted funds focused on children's health, both in hospitals and in the community. The time is now to take bold action in this critically important area.

After three long years of this pandemic, it truly is time to Make Kids Count. Together, we can get it done. Please visit our [Make Kids Count Action Plan](#) to see the details around how we can ensure the health and well-being of Ontario's children. We stand ready to answer any questions you or your team may have.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your budget considerations.

Sincerely,

**Jennifer Churchill**  
CEO, Empowered Kids Ontario

**Dr. Ronald Cohn**  
President and CEO, The Hospital for Sick Children

**Lauren Ettin**  
Executive Director, Kids Health Alliance

**Julia Hanigsberg**  
President and CEO, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH COALITION



**Alex Munter**

President and CEO, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario

**Bruce Squires**

President, McMaster Children's Hospital

**Nash Syed**

President, Children's Hospital – London Health Sciences Centre

**Tatum Wilson**

CEO, Children's Mental Health Ontario