

Government of Ontario Pre-Budget Consultations for 2022-2023: Incorporating Sustainable
Funding Models for Physician Assistants

Dear Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs,

I am writing this letter to request that the Government of Ontario consider investing more funds into incorporating Physician Assistants (PAs) into our healthcare system by introducing sustainable PA funding models that allow PAs to continue increasing access to healthcare and reducing wait times.

PAs are medically educated clinicians who practice medicine through formalized relationships with physicians, extending their services. PAs can assess, diagnose, implement treatment plans, prescribe medications, and first assist in surgeries. The intensive 2-year medical training and collaborative PA/physician relationship allows PAs to have wide scopes of practice that allow them to address shortages in healthcare personnel, which has been exacerbated during COVID-19.

In an effort to prove their worth, the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants employed the Conference Board of Canada to conduct research on the value and efficiency of PAs^{1,2}. The results of these reports found that PAs help reduce wait times, increase access to healthcare, and reduce physician burnout^{1,2}. Despite this known value, and the success of PAs in the United States of America who employ over 125,000 working PAs³, there are only 800 practicing PAs in Canada, with 500 of them working in Ontario⁴. This may be attributed to the lack of nation-wide profession regulations, the limited number of Canadian PA programs (University of Toronto, McMaster University, and University of Manitoba), but arguably the most prominent, is the absence of robust funding models.

When discussing with physicians about their viewpoints on hiring PAs, one obstacle becomes apparent: the financial constraint of funding a PA. Currently, sources of PA funding

come from pilot projects, grant funding for new graduates, academic speciality groups, and direct funding from physicians or hospitals⁵. With the lack of defined funding models, many physicians/employers overlook the benefits of PAs simply because they don't know how to pay them. This places substantial limits on the growth of this profession, despite its increasing popularity as last year, McMaster University had over 1200 applicants for only 24 spots⁶.

By introducing sustainable government funding of PAs, more physicians/employers will hire PAs. This will likely contribute to the enhancement of PA student enrollment from the current 69 graduating students annually across the 3 programs, 54 of which graduate from Ontario⁷.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this request to invest more in the future of patient-centered, allied healthcare teams.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pradhariny Prabakaran', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Pradhariny Prabakaran, BSc

MSc Candidate

McMaster University

Works Cited

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