

Adrienne Spafford  
CEO, Addictions and Mental Health Ontario  
Remarks to Standing Committee on Social Policy re: Bill 74  
April 2, 2019  
Check Against Delivery

I would like to start by thanking the committee for giving me the time to speak with you today.

My name is Adrienne Spafford, I am the CEO of Addictions & Mental Health Ontario.

Here with me today is our Past Board President, Vaughan Dowie, CEO of Pine River Institute.

We are here as the voice of our entire membership — representing 200 addiction and mental health service providers, all across the province — places like Mississauga, Kitchener, Niagara and Thunder Bay.

As the leading provider of community addiction and mental health services, our members have decades, and in some cases, a century-long worth of experience. For the most part, we were established by local leaders who had a personal connection to mental health and addiction; and who saw an unmet need.

They are people who have worked in this field for years, often the only people who at any given moment are connected to their clients in the journey of recovery.

Some of this work takes place in hospitals such as the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care in Penetanguishene but most are community-based, local operations like Halton Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Assessment, Prevention & Treatment and Peel Addiction Assessment & Referral Centre in Mississauga.

Through a wide range of services like treatment, counselling, withdrawal management, and housing we help more than **300,000 Ontarians** every year on their recovery journey.

Because of this we have a unique vantage point on Ontario's health-care system.

We know that there are exceptional addiction and mental health care services in this province that are already working to reduce wait times and keep people out of hospital – because we see it every day.

But we also know and agree that too many Ontarians are falling through the gaps trying to access and navigate across these services.

Too many Ontarians are waiting too long on wait lists, ending up in hospital when they should be receiving treatment in their community. And every year too many Ontarians die from overdose and suicide.

That is why, AMHO members support the government's goal of building a patient-centric health-care system.

We want to work together to ensure that all Ontarians can access the mental health and addiction treatment they need, in their local community, when they need it.

We want to help Ontarians access services across the continuum of care from hospital, to withdrawal management, to treatment, intensive case management, supportive housing or harm reduction.

We want to ensure that no matter where someone lives in this province they receive the same standard of mental health and addiction treatment.

And we want to ensure that Ontarians do not have to wait months to get access to essential health-care services.

We think it's time today to ensure that Ontarians struggling with their mental health or substance use receive the same average standard of care as someone diagnosed with cancer, cardiac or renal disease.

This goal will require specific attention, direction and funding from government, in partnership with service providers. We believe this is the government's intention in the work underway lead by the Deputy Premier, and her Parliamentary Assistant, MPP Robin Martin, to develop a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions strategy to support implementation of the government's \$3.8 billion, 10 year investment in mental health and addiction. We look forward to continuing to work with government in advancing this important agenda forward.

Since the Deputy Premier's announcement in February, AMHO has been holding regional meetings across the province to discuss these changes. I'm pleased to tell you that by the time we are done, we will have connected with more than

120 of our members in person, specifically to talk about and answer questions on the Bill, Ontario Health and Ontario Health Teams. I think this level of interest tells us that there is a high level of anxiety around these changes. But I also think it tells you there is a commitment on their part to evolve and adapt.

What our members told us is that government needs to:

- **Protect locally run (locally governed) community-based mental health and addictions care, and ensure these services are a part of every Ontario Health Team,**
- **Listen to and learn from community mental health and addiction front-line providers and leaders when it comes to system transformation and what patients need; and**
- **Expand access to community-based addiction and mental health services to best support Ontarians, reduce wait times and tackle hallway healthcare, not by starting from scratch but by building on what is already working in our system.**

Our members also asked me to deliver the message to you today that Ontario Health Teams should be required by government guidelines and measured by Ontario Health through an equity lens that pays specific attention to Indigenous people, Franco-Ontarians, the LGBTQ community, and racialized communities. We are also asking that Ontario Health be required to consider the additional cost and operational challenges of delivering equitable services in Northern and rural Ontario.

The written submission we are providing today is a joint submission on Bill 74 developed with our partners in the addiction and mental health sector at the Canadian Mental Health Association – Ontario and Children’s Mental Health Ontario. I know you have already heard from my colleagues Camille Quenneville and Kim Moran.

As leaders in community-based mental health and addiction service provision, we want to work with all of our government partners to get this transformation right. We are here to help the government make this health care system transformation a success for patients, clients, care providers and the tax payer.

The recommendations from our joint submission are as follows:

1. Community-based, local mental health and addiction providers must play a central role in the delivery of mental health and addictions care through Ontario Health Teams. Attention must be paid not just to mental health or addictions – priority should be placed on improving services and outcomes across the full continuum, including concurrent disorder.
2. Ontario Health Teams must focus on providing Ontarians with continuity of mental health and addiction care across the lifespan, from children and youth to adults and seniors.
3. Ontario Health must identify, adopt, and implement a standardized set of core services for addiction and mental health care across the province. *AMHO in partnership with CMHO and CMHA-Ontario are already working on establishing this list of services with the Ontario Hospital Association.*
4. Ontario Health must focus on the implementation of a strong, client-centred data strategy for mental health and addiction care, so that the level of care provided through Ontario Health Teams can be measured and maximized and so that

quality improvement efforts and outcome measures can be more data driven.

5. Ontario Health must establish a baseline of funding to community mental health and addiction service providers and must commit to both protecting and growing these funding levels to support capacity building within our sector. I can't over emphasize how much we agree with the Premier's Council that one of the biggest factors in ending hallway healthcare is to increase capacity and improve quality and connections outside of the "hospital hallways" – by focusing on community support and services and on primary care.

These five shared recommendations will help protect and improve services and supports for our member clients as we transition to the Ontario Health Team model. And they will build the framework for an addiction and mental health system that works for patients.

Together with our member agencies and branches, we look forward to continuing to work closely with the provincial government to create a health-care system that supports the physical and mental health of all Ontarians.

Thank you for having me here today.