



# ONTARIO 2025 ELECTION

January 29, 2025

## OPA'S KEY PRIORITIES

Physiotherapists are a vital component of Ontarians' physical, social, and economic health, and much has been accomplished over the past 15 years. Nevertheless, continuing the expansion of access to physiotherapy by regulated physiotherapists across the province will further strengthen Ontario's workforce, improve overall productivity for individuals and employers and reduce the strain on our healthcare system, ultimately fostering a more prosperous and self-sufficient future for all Ontarians. Regardless of where they live or their ability to pay, Ontarians must have timely access to physiotherapists and their full scope of practice to provide essential rehabilitative care.

Ontario is dealing with a health care crisis with many people facing extraordinary barriers to needed care. This election, we call on all candidates to commit to ensuring Ontarians have equitable, timely access to the essential services provided by physiotherapists, physiotherapy residents, and physiotherapist assistants. We urge candidates to support the following four priorities to build an effective Health Care system in Ontario:

### 1. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS IN ONTARIO

Growing the number of physiotherapists in Ontario is critical to meet the increasing demands on our system for rehabilitation care in private practice, primary care, hospital care, long-term care and home and community care. Build capacity by:

- Funding to increase enrollment and clinical placement capacity in physiotherapy academic programs.
- Facilitating entry to physiotherapy programs for people from diverse communities who have been historically underrepresented groups, particularly from the BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous communities.
- Expediting more internationally educated physiotherapists to be licensed to practice in Ontario by streamlining the credentialing process and funding the internationally educated physiotherapist bridging program to foster examination success and work readiness.



## **2. ADD PHYSIOTHERAPISTS TO MORE INTERPROFESSIONAL CARE TEAMS**

We call on candidates to support improved health outcomes by:

- Funding positions for physiotherapists in all primary care teams
- Supporting first contact roles for physiotherapists to expedite care

Expanding the investment in primary health care organizations by adding physiotherapists is necessary to ensure that all Ontarians have access to primary health care with integrated physiotherapy services. All Ontarians should have the essential healthcare they need, including physiotherapy by physiotherapists, to promote well-being and injury prevention, recover from surgery or injury, and live optimally with chronic conditions in their homes and communities.

The effectiveness of interdisciplinary primary care teams throughout Ontario is remarkable, and improved health outcomes and equitable access for all Ontarians will occur with increased capacity. This will reduce wait times and enhance access to the right service at the right time in the right place, fostering a collaborative approach to patient-centred care.

## **3. FINALIZE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCOPE OF PRACTICE**

We call on candidates to increase health system capacity and efficiency by finalizing the regulations needed for physiotherapists to practise to their full competencies, including ordering diagnostic imaging and laboratory tests. These include changes that were enabled by the Ontario Legislature in 2009 but have not been implemented by the Ministry of Health.

With the authority to order relevant diagnostic tests, physiotherapists can ease the pressures on other providers, especially in primary care, orthopaedic and rheumatology specialty and emergency department settings.

With no, or very minimal impact on cost, these changes would directly lead to an improved patient experience of navigating the healthcare system and reducing wait times leading to faster recovery from illness and injury for many.



#### **4. RESOLVE PROGRAM AND COMPENSATION RELATED CHALLENGES**

We urge candidates to implement policies and funding increases that support fair, equitable compensation and are comparable to increases in other disciplines of the healthcare workforce (e.g., nurses, mid-wives, physicians). Underfunding physiotherapy leads to service scarcity, long wait times, and poorer health outcomes for Ontarians in publicly funded and insurance-based programs. The inconsistent funding of physiotherapy services severely impacts recruitment and retention with many physiotherapists withdrawing services because of the lack financial viability to deliver.

It is essential that physiotherapists are accessible to Ontarians of all ages and abilities. To support the wellbeing and prosperity of the province, the sustainability of the physiotherapy profession is critical, and to reduce professional attrition, it is imperative that underfunded physiotherapy programs are improved administratively and fiscally, including:

- Community Physiotherapy Program (CPC)
- Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) Programs of Care – Auto Insurance Programs including the Minor Injury Guideline (MIG) and Professional Services Guideline (PSG)

#### **WANT TO KNOW MORE?**

The Ontario Physiotherapy Association is the Ontario branch of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association representing more than 5700 member physiotherapists, residents, physiotherapist assistants and students in your communities.

#### **CONTACT US**

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