Hon. Eric Hoskins, MPP (St. Paul's) Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care 10th Floor, Hepburn Block 80 Grosvenor Street Toronto, Ontario M7A2C4



February 29, 2016

Dear Minister Hoskins:

## **Re: Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee's response to the Proposal to Strengthen Patient-Centred Health Care in Ontario**

The Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee (P-HSJCC) have reviewed the discussion paper, *Patients First*, and is pleased for this opportunity to provide our perspective to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committees (HSJCC) were established in Ontario to coordinate resources and services and to plan more effectively for people who are in conflict with the law, especially those with a serious mental illness, developmental disability, acquired brain injury, drug and alcohol addiction, and fetal alcohol syndrome. The HSJCC Network represents a cooperative effort between the Ministries of the Attorney General, Community and Social Services, Children and Youth Services, Health and Long-Term Care, and Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Provincial HSJCC consists of Ministry representatives and Regional chairs and has been developed as a provincial planning body for the HSJCC network.

The Provincial HSJCC commends the Government of Ontario on its proposed strategy for its focus on consistent, accountable and integrated primary care, home and community care, population health and public health services. The Provincial HSJCC is also pleased that the proposed strategy recognized that Indigenous Peoples, Franco-Ontarians, and other cultural groups face greater challenges in accessing appropriate care. Along with these vulnerable populations, the Provincial HSJCC recommends the consideration of Ontarians who have come into contact with the law in the proposed strategy.

As you may know, between 50,000 and 60,000 people in Ontario (more than 1 in 250 Ontarians) spend time in a provincial correctional facility each year. This is a population that experiences poor health for a number of complex reasons. We know that people who experience detention and incarceration have higher rate of mortality and morbidity than the general population, including higher rates of mental illnesses, substance use disorders, communicable diseases, and intentional and unintentional injuries.<sup>1-3</sup>

Primary care in provincial correctional facilities is currently overseen and delivered by

the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS). There is minimal quality assurance system in place for those services provided in correctional facilities. Further, there are gaps in the services that are available in many provincial facilities compared to what is available in the community. As an example, the treatment options for mental health and addiction conditions are limited compared to what is available in the community, so that the time in custody represents a missed opportunity to help people to address their mental health and addiction needs.

The consequences of not providing adequate health care for this population are significant, and include the transmission of communicable diseases to the general population, high costs of health care, high costs of recidivism and re-incarceration, and risks to public safety.<sup>4</sup>

The Provincial HJSCC is recommending the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to consider ways to integrate primary care in correctional facilities with other health care and public health services. Specifically, primary care should be included in provincial correctional facilities in any model that is developed for the oversight and administration of primary care in the community, (i.e. Local Health Integration Networks as per the proposal) in order to optimize quality and continuity of care. Improved integration of primary care in correctional facilities will improve the health care delivered in these settings and lead to better health outcomes for individuals in both provincial and federal correctional institutions.

The Provincial HSJCC welcomes an opportunity to provide further comment on this issue if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

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- 2. Kouyoumdjian F, Schuler A, Hwang SW, Matheson Fl. The health status of prisoners in Canada: A narrative review. Canadian Family Physician. In press, 2016.
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