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MPP - Niagara West



NEWS RELEASE



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New Niagara Ontario Health Team Better Connects Care and Supports COVID-19 Response

NEWS

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ST. CATHARINES — In support of the ongoing fight against COVID-19 and as part of the province's plan to end hallway health care, the Ontario government is announcing a new Ontario Health Team in Niagara and is providing additional funding to better connect care.

"Over the past several months, Ontario Health Teams have demonstrated remarkable responsiveness to the COVID-19 outbreak by simplifying the purchase of personal protective equipment, supporting the staffing of long-term care homes and assessment centers and expanding virtual care options," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

"They've done so by breaking down long-standing barriers to better connect care, both in support of patients and our brave frontline heroes. Today's announcement of a new Ontario Health Team in Niagara will build on this success as we continue to implement our plan to defeat COVID-19."

The Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara – is one of five new Ontario Health Teams being established across the province at this time. Ontario Health Teams bring together health care providers to work as one team to improve patient outcomes. Through an Ontario Health Team, patients will experience easier transitions from one provider to another, including, for example, between hospitals and home care providers, with one patient story, one patient record and one care plan. Patients and families will also have access to 24/7 navigation and care coordination services.

The Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara – will focus on complex care needs in palliative care and stroke care, children and youth with mental health and addictions needs, as well as people with minor acute issues requiring home care. The team will also focus on building trusting relationships with the Indigenous and francophone population.

"I want to congratulate and thank the Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara, for all the impressive work they have done to provide better patient-centred health care," said Sam Oosterhoff, MPP for Niagara West.

"There is still lots of work to be done, but by continuing to work together, we can provide patients and families in our community with the care they deserve."

The province is also investing up to \$25.25 million to directly support the 29 approved Ontario Health Teams. Of this funding, \$9.5 million will be dedicated to virtual care, which will provide more support for vulnerable populations and individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. With the remaining \$15.75 million, each Ontario Health Team will receive up to \$375,000, to be used for:

- Expanding digital care, including training, education and purchasing new tools and technology for virtual visits, booking online appointments and patient portals;
- Dedicated human resources to help develop and implement this new model of care, including more collaborative responses to COVID-19; and
- Purchasing business information tools to measure the performance and outcomes of the Ontario Health Team model.

"As a family member who is part of the planning table of the Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara – I am proud of the work that has been done to have Niagara's health team approved," said Sarah Cannon, a family and caregiver advisor with the new health team. "This will allow for a coordinated, co-developed system of healthcare in Niagara that has been started with the commitment to ongoing co-planning with patients and clients and their family caregivers."

"On behalf of the IHN, we believe the commitments of the Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara – will improve the quality of healthcare for Indigenous peoples and others; commitments like adopting our Position Statement on Ontario Health Teams and its guiding principles for meaningful partnerships alongside mandatory Indigenous Cultural Safety Training," said Wendy Sturgeon, Co-Chair of the Indigenous Health Network. "We also support the adoption of the Indigenous consensus decision-making model, leading to shared, responsible action. Mno Bmaadziwin."

"The Niagara Ontario Health Team - Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara - strives to recognize the specific challenges and needs of Francophones in our region to access health care in French and is committed to implement linguistically appropriate services

to meet them," said Sean Keays, CEO of Foyer Richelieu, and Marcel Castonguay, Executive Director of Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara. "Of course, challenges will not disappear instantly, but we believe that the efforts and collaboration of all team members and partners, including the population we serve, will result in a tangible improvement in the offer of French language services in Niagara."

"The pandemic has reinforced how important it is to function within an integrated health system," said Lynn Guerriero, President of Niagara Health. "Partnerships will be key in our work to create a stronger health system, so that people of Niagara get the care they need, wherever and whenever they need it."

"Collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara – has a tremendous opportunity to improve the health and well-being of our region by working together," added local family physician, Dr. Darija Vujosevic. "It takes the creativity, flexibility and commitment of everyone involved to transform the delivery of care in Niagara."

Last year, the Ontario government began implementing its plan to build a new, integrated health care system for patients by announcing the first 24 Ontario Health Teams and Ontario Health, a single agency to oversee quality health care delivery, and improve clinical guidance and support for providers. The strong partnerships and integrated care established by Ontario Health Teams and Ontario Health has helped better position the province to respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19.

As Ontario Health Teams continue to expand across the province, these partnerships and the lessons learned will also help better prepare the province for a potential second wave of COVID-19 and flu season.

Quick Facts

- An Ontario Health Team is responsible for delivering care for their patients, understanding their health care history, easing their transition from one provider to another, directly connecting them to the different types of care they need and providing 24/7 help in navigating the health care system.
- Under an Ontario Health Team, Ontarians can be confident that they can continue to contact their health care providers as they always have, to access the health care they need. The Ontario government will continue working with its health care partners until Ontario Health Teams are fully established across the province and everyone is supported by a team.

Additional Resources

- Visit [Ontario's website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.
- Learn more about [Ontario Health Teams](#).
- Learn more about [Ontario Health](#).

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