



October 1, 2011

Mr. Gordon Floyd
President and Chief Executive Officer
Children's Mental Health Ontario
309–40 St. Clair Avenue East
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 1M9

Dear Mr. Floyd:

Thank you very much for your letter regarding children and youth mental health. This is an issue of great importance to Ontario Liberals and all Ontarians — and I want to thank you for your commitment and advocacy on behalf of children and youth with mental health issues.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the efforts Ontario Liberals have made and to our plans moving forward in ensuring that all Ontarians have access to the mental health and addictions supports and services they need.

Ontario Liberals know that as many as one in five people in Ontario will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and that 70 per cent of symptoms develop during childhood or adolescence. We also understand that the effect of mental illness is much broader, as it touches on the well-being of our families, friends and the communities in which we live. Ontario Liberals are strongly committed to addressing children and youth mental health and addictions with high-quality, timely supports and services for all Ontarians.

Earlier this year, we reaffirmed mental health and addictions as a priority by announcing an annual investment for children's mental health that will grow to \$93 million in 2013–14. We are investing \$257 million over the next three years for children's mental health, in addition to our annual investments of over \$400 million in this area. We will be providing 50 per cent more in financial support for children's mental health services than in 2003.

Last June we released *Open Minds, Healthy Minds*, our Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. The strategy provides a road map to enhance mental health

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services across one's lifespan, from childhood to old age, and to provide the integrated services and supports that Ontarians need if they experience a mental illness or addiction.

The strategy, which builds on the framework, *A Shared Responsibility: Ontario's Policy Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health*, was the culmination of months of active consultation and engagement with people across the province, including experts, service providers and, most importantly, people touched by mental health or addiction issues. I am proud of our shared efforts in developing a strategy that paves the way to real and meaningful change that will improve the lives of affected Ontarians.

As part of our new Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, we are focusing on children first. With an investment in services and supports of \$257 million over the next three years, some 50,000 Ontario children and their families will now have quicker and easier access to the right mental health supports, when and where they need them. New services and supports focus on three key areas — fast access to high-quality services, early identification and support, and help for vulnerable children with unique needs. Some of our key investments include:

- Placing mental health workers and nurses with mental health expertise in schools, which will benefit over 9,000 children
- Providing more services such as short-term therapy and crisis intervention to help 13,000 more children and reduce wait lists
- Providing culturally appropriate services to 4,000 more Aboriginal children by hiring new Aboriginal mental health workers
- Keeping 2,300 youth out of the justice system by adding more mental health court workers who can refer them instead to community-based services, such as life skills programs
- Helping more than 16,000 youth transitioning from the secondary to postsecondary level by adding more mental health workers on campuses.

Most importantly, now that we have a plan, leadership falls on the shoulders of all of us, and by working together we can strengthen our ability to ensure that all Ontarians have the access to the supports and services they need. By working together, we can increase awareness, erase stigma, develop understanding and build stronger communities.

Ontario Liberals have shown leadership in addressing mental health and addictions in Ontario — and we will continue to make it a priority going forward. As part of our *Forward. Together.* plan we want to build on the investments we have made in children's mental health, and will invest an additional \$30 million annually to improve mental health and addiction supports for adults, focusing on prevention, early identification and services.

If re-elected, we will continue to work collaboratively with Children's Mental Health Ontario and our partners across the province to better integrate mental health services in Ontario. We will work to ensure that our efforts have a real and lasting impact for Ontarians. And we will work more closely with our partners to reduce stigma and silos in schools, hospitals, workplaces, communities and the justice system.

The PCs and NDP opposed our \$257-million investment to support children and families. They are silent on mental health in their platforms — a clear indication of where their priorities lie. Addressing mental health is not one of them.

The \$14-billion hole in the PC platform will certainly lead to devastating cuts to the social programs and services that matter to Ontarians. We recognize that mental health and well-being is vital to the health and prosperity of our great province. We do not want to see these programs jeopardized.

Ontario Liberals remain committed to building an Ontario where high-quality, accessible mental health system is there for children and youth when they need it. To make this a reality, we need to keep moving forward together, and we are the only party who will make that happen.

Again, I want to thank Children's Mental Health Ontario for your commitment and advocacy. Ontario Liberals hope to have the opportunity to continue to work with you and our partners, and to build on the progress we have made together.

Please accept my best wishes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dalton" being more prominent and the last name "McGuinty" following in a similar style.

Dalton McGuinty
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Premier