

MEDIA RELEASE

As the crisis in family medicine gets worse, government continues to show doctors it doesn't care

January 23, 2024 (Toronto, Ontario) - "Don't listen to what people say; watch what they do." So says Steven Levitt, co-author of the bestseller *Freakonomics* and an expert on human thought and behaviour. What would Levitt think about the Government of Ontario's treatment of Ontario's family doctors? We can only imagine.

Family medicine in Ontario is in crisis. Presently, approximately [2.3 million](#) Ontarians are without a family doctor, and that number is likely to rise as population increases and attrition in the ranks of family doctors sets in. In a recent survey, three-quarters of Ontario family doctors polled self-reported that they are considering leaving the profession. And many are at their wits end dealing with ever-increasing costs and workloads with no respite in sight.

"I don't know that people really understand how dire things are," says Dr. David Barber, Chair of the Section on General and Family Practice at the Ontario Medical Association, the group within the OMA that represents family doctors. "The amount of concern we are hearing from our members right now is unprecedented. Family doctors in Ontario are exhausted and beleaguered. But the crisis doesn't just affect them, it affects all Ontarians who rely on the care of family doctors for themselves and their families. The first step in fixing a problem is to acknowledge it, and we are looking to the Government of Ontario to take this very seriously and commit to developing solutions to keep family medicine sustainable in Ontario," he said.

Last week, doctors in Ontario received a new piece of bad news to add to the growing pile when they learned that they will be subsidizing the costs of population growth in Ontario. A recent update from the Ontario Medical Association to its members explains that for this year, there will be an increase to doctors' fees between 0% and 1.2%. Initially, the increase was expected to fall between 2.1% and 3.6%, but an increase in the population of Ontario means more medical care was provided and ate away the planned increase in fees.

In effect, the Government of Ontario sets aside a certain amount of money for medical care, but when Ontario's population increased by half a million people, no corresponding increase to the budget for care was made, so doctors are required to pick up the slack. Family doctors are faced with many inflationary costs in the management of their clinics, but will need to absorb those costs themselves if they wish to continue to operate their practices.

In an environment of increased costs, increased workload, plummeting morale and significant workforce attrition, this latest news contributes to a strong sense among Ontario's family doctors that the Government of Ontario either doesn't understand or doesn't care about the severity of the crisis we are in.