



August 1, 2024

Dear Members,

Over the last 10 months, the Section of Family Medicine, Section of Rural Medicine and the Primary Care Networks Leads, along with other physician leaders and AMA support, have worked, in good faith, with Alberta Health and elected members of the Alberta Government, toward the revitalization of family medicine across the province. We invested our time, our energy and our experience hoping it would result in the betterment of both Alberta family physicians and the health of Albertans.

I am writing to you today with a greater sense of urgency than ever because that hope is waning to the point of extinction.

We had been told that the Minister of Health was intending to announce the details of the Physician Comprehensive Care Model (PCCM) at a press conference this week. This is no longer happening and has been delayed by the Minister until at least the fall. It is also my understanding that the implementation of this model (if it comes at all) will not occur until 2025. I have been told by our AH partners that the delay in the announcement is due to the government's focus on the terrible situation in Jasper. Without question, the wildfire impact is devastating and distressing, and my heart goes out to all affected. However, this disaster should not be used to justify the nebulous delay of any future announcement date regarding the PCCM. Nor should the complexity of updating AH billing systems to adapt to the PCCM justify the "slow walking" (i.e. 2025) of the PCCM itself. The only interpretation is that this government has no real interest in timely investment in physician-led primary care. This is unacceptable and disingenuous.

The Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by both the Minister and the AMA in October of 2023 appeared to understand the urgency in primary care. The frequent and never-ending number of meetings with AH representatives seemed to support that urgency. We have invested hundreds of hours in developing the proposed PCCM, which was recently approved by internal AH processes - the Rates Committee and the Management Committee. And now, it is clear, the PCCM is stalled. Dr. Paul Parks articulated his frustration with this lack of urgency in the [President's Letter](#) shared earlier today.

Family physicians remain in the same environment as they were in October of 2023. Nothing has changed. If anything, conditions are worsening as more clinics have closed their doors and more physicians have left the province. Other provinces facing similar

circumstances have addressed the issue. Where is the responsible leadership within the current Government of Alberta to manage this crisis?

As our health care system continues to collapse and family physicians struggle to hold on, I am also concerned by what I have read about an event hosted in Calgary where the premier answered pre-approved questions on many topics, including vaccines, lockdowns and physician autonomy. The anti-science rhetoric and misinformation that permeated the event was deeply alarming and I am left once again wondering if our elected officials understand and respect the physicians who care for the people of this province. How can we work with them to pull primary care back from the brink of collapse if they don't recognize the value of what we do or understand what happens when we aren't there to do it?

Despite the fact that many Albertans do not have access to family physicians and strong primary care, our government appears to have determined that fiscal restraint is more important than protecting the health of our population. What good is a budget surplus if the people of this province are sick, scared and unable to find the care they need? Saving for the future is an idealistic goal when so many people are suffering today. Many of them may not get the opportunity to see that future.

So, what is next?

The Section of Family Medicine will continue to work closely with the AMA to advocate for the needs of family doctors, the necessity of community-based family medicine, and the health of Albertans. But it may be time to acknowledge the elephant in the room and accept that our elected officials simply don't prioritize responsible health care. Further, we may need to admit that Alberta is no longer (and has not been for several years) an optimal place to practice family medicine. I will do everything I can to change that reality. Our members and our patients deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sarah Bates, Acting President
Section of Family Medicine
On behalf of your [SFM Executive](#)

Mission

- Advocate fiercely for Family Medicine.
- Collaborate to drive health system improvement.
- Achieve compensation that reflects the essential role of family physicians in the health of Albertans.

Vision

Alberta's family doctors are well-supported and financially equipped to provide accessible, quality team-based health care.



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