

## **Alberta Medical Association Response to Statement by Minister of Health LaGrange: Progress on primary care compensation**

**September 19, 2024**

Today, the Minister of Health released a statement about investment in primary care. Primary care is vital to Alberta's health, yet the government's promised Primary Care Comprehensive Model (PCCM) remains stalled with no timeline provided for implementation. The work on PCCM was undertaken to ensure Alberta's physicians providing lifelong comprehensive patient care would be fairly compensated, increasing retention and recruitment of physicians for the benefit of Albertans. But after months of delay today's statement simply equates to another empty promise by the current government and another request to 'hang in there' to Alberta's primary care doctors.

**Family medicine continues to be in crisis. 'Progress' toward a new compensation model is not the same as implementing the new model. Implementation of the PCCM is needed now.**

The AMA has been working with government on a fair and sustainable model for family and rural generalist physicians, the Physician Comprehensive Care Model (PCCM). The details of that model, including the model elements and rates, are complete. It's ready. We are solely awaiting approval from the Minister of Health to implement the model.

Further delays in the implementation of the PCCM means more physician clinics will close, leaving more Albertans without a family doctor.

**Alberta's primary care doctors are not among the highest paid in the country. The Minister's statement is false.**

Alberta physicians WERE one of the highest paid in Canada and were at the forefront of recruitment and retention of physicians. With the release of new primary care physician models in many other provinces across Canada, Alberta is no longer competitive. We are behind and falling further behind every day.

Most Alberta physicians are small business owners. Physician offices are a major part of the infrastructure of the health care system. Payment through family physician compensation models covers operational costs and infrastructure for physician offices, it is not a direct salary for family physicians.



**The investment in primary care mentioned today by the Minister of Health was additional money provided by the federal government, the Government of Canada. While this investment is appreciated and valued, it does not absolve the Government of Alberta from properly funding the remaining amount needed to cover publicly funded health services for Alberta population.**

The Government of Alberta has not properly budgeted for the primary health care of Alberta's population, nor for related compensation of physicians choosing longitudinal family care. Alberta Health is choosing to delay PCCM, and to further delay the approval and implementation of Alternative Relationship Plans (ARPs) for hospitalists and acute care that bring better value for money in the care of Albertans. Alberta Health is distracted by the Health System Refocus, spending millions of dollars on consultants designing a system that will increase government administration and bureaucracy instead of investing in front-line care providers.

**Empty promises will not sustain Alberta's family doctors. The Premier and the Minister of Health must act now.**

Today's news release by the Minister of Health is simply another indication of inadequate management of Alberta's health care budget by the provincial government. It is indicative of a lack of understanding of how insufficient investment in physician lifelong, comprehensive patient care, and broader primary care, increase pressure on the acute care system. And our acute care system is in crisis. An announcement that says nothing new and, in saying nothing, is confusing even to those familiar with the issues involved, wastes time and taxpayer dollars. As for the PCCM, we need it implemented now so Albertans can find a family or rural generalist physician to call their own.