Thursday, May 22 2008

Mayor Fred Eisenberger
Mayor, City of Hamilton
77 James Street NorthSuite 230
Hamilton ON L8R 2K3

Dear Mayor:

On March 25, 2008 the Government of Ontario included in its budget $38 million to create nurse-only clinics. The Ontario Medical Association (OMA) believes this represents a marked departure from the government’s long-standing commitment to collaborative, integrated primary care models that serve the best interests of patients.

It is my hope that as the representative voice of your community, you will join us in continuing to promote collaborative care models so that the provincial government takes whatever steps necessary to ensure and insist your constituents – and our patients – have ready access to the care that only a family physician can provide.

With the recent implementation of the pilot nurse practitioner clinic in Sudbury, Ontario’s doctors raised concerns with the Ministry of Health Long-Term Care that a “nurse-only” approach was inconsistent with the goal of integrating health providers. The OMA has been clear in our concern that before the province embarks on an approach that divides providers and lacks any evidence of success, that the pilot must be evaluated to ensure patients are receiving seamless, integrated care.

The OMA has long supported the government’s commitment to advancing collaborative models of primary care – such as Family Health Teams – and were pleased with Budget 2008’s funding of 50 more of these teams by 2011-12. We have also recently initiated other shared care models, where nurses are joining already existing models, like Family Health Groups. Both of these models bring together the training and experience of doctors, with nurses and other health professionals, in order to provide the highest level of quality care by the appropriate provider, at the appropriate time.

Quite simply, it is our responsibility to the communities we serve, to ensure we are doing everything possible to provide them with the highest level of care. We would ask that you echo our call for the Government of Ontario to take the necessary steps to ensure appropriate physician care in your community.

Sincerely,

Ken Arnold MB BCh
President