



September 18, 2011

Mr. John Ellis
Executive Director
Family Service Ontario
630-190 Attwell Drive
Toronto, Ontario
M9W 6H8

Dear Mr. Ellis:

Thank you very much for your letter regarding 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 those 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. We also understand that the effect of mental illness is much broader, as it touches on the well-being of our families, friends, co-workers and the communities in which we live. Ontario Liberals are strongly committed to addressing mental health and addictions with high-quality, timely supports and services for all Ontarians.

Since 2003, Ontario Liberals have increased funding by 80 per cent for community mental health, and 49 per cent for addictions programs. We expanded key community mental health programs such as intensive case management, assertive community treatment, crisis intervention and early psychosis intervention. We have invested in court support programs, intensive case management, supportive housing and safe beds to keep people with serious mental illness out of the criminal justice and corrections systems.

...2/

Ontario Liberal Party, 10 St. Mary St., Suite 210, Toronto, ON M4Y 1P9

Phone: (416) 961-3800, 1-800-268-7250 Fax: (416) 323-9425 E-Mail: info@ontarioliberal.com
Web: www.ontarioliberal.com

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 \$400 million in this area. We are 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 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. Our strategy sets out the course for achieving four goals:

- Improve mental health and well-being for all Ontarians
- Create healthy, resilient, inclusive communities
- Identify mental health and addiction problems early
- Provide timely, high-quality, integrated, person-directed health and human services.

The strategy 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 addictions 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.

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 election platform, *Forward. Together.*, 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 addictions supports for adults, focusing on prevention, early identification and services.

If re-elected, we will continue to work collaboratively with our partners 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 the 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 a high-quality, accessible mental health system is there for people when they need it. To make this a reality, we need to keep moving forward together, and we are the only ones who will make that happen.

I want to thank you again for your commitment and advocacy. I look forward to sharing many more successes with you in the near future. 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" written in a more compact, connected style.

Dalton McGuinty
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Premier