

## City Council

### Motion without Notice

MM5.45	ACTION			Ward: All
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### Protecting Access to Healthcare for all Ontarians - by Councillor Shelley Carroll, seconded by Councillor Chris Moise

*\* This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

*\* This Motion is not subject to a vote to waive referral. This Motion has been added to the agenda and is before Council for debate.*

#### Recommendations

Councillor Shelley Carroll, seconded by Councillor Chris Moise, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Government of Ontario reverse its decision to end the Physician and Hospital Services for Uninsured Persons Program on March 31, 2023.

#### Summary

As both the Province and the City continue to move towards a state of recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, our future decisions surrounding policies and services should be guided by what this lengthy period of uncertainty has taught us. A key lesson being that every Ontarian, regardless of their social or financial status should have access to medical care.

The Province's recent decision to end the "Physician and Hospital Services for Uninsured Persons Program" seeks to undo the critical work that many healthcare professionals have been able to undertake for their most vulnerable patients. Ending this program will remove access to supports and care from over a million Ontarians, many who are members of marginalized groups and have come to rely on this program without worrying about how much visiting a doctor was going to cost them.

In a report published by the Health Network for Uninsured Clients (HNUC), it found that the removal of the financial component of care has created a positive domino effect throughout the system, where doctors and nurses have seen less fear and hesitation in patients seeking out emergency and clinical care in a timely manner. This has led to better health outcomes, early detection of critical illnesses and a significant decrease in mortality. Other healthcare professionals have seen a major reduction in the administrative burden because the system allows them to seamlessly refer their patients for specialists and follow up care, without having to worry about any of them being turned away due to their inability to pay for a service.

The positive impacts of the program have been far reaching and its suspension will re-introduce the many inequities it sought to eliminate. It will abruptly cut off medical services for many patients who are currently seeking critical care and will force newcomers out of the system.

As the fourth largest city in North America, Toronto is home to thousands of newcomers each year, many who are uninsured and continue to struggle with homelessness and their immigration status in Canada. The barriers that newcomers face in applying for OHIP will be further exacerbated by the suspension of this program, and without any alternatives in place will lead to many opting not to access emergency and primary care due to fear of deportation, unaffordability and racial bias among the many other inequities that continue to exist within the healthcare system in Ontario.

Reason for Urgency: program is set to expire on March 31, 2023.

**Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM5.45