

**Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère de la Santé  
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**MAY 01 2015**

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Dr. Andreas Laupacis  
Board Chair  
Health Quality Ontario  
130 Bloor St. West, 10th Floor  
Toronto ON M5S 1 N5

Dear Dr. Laupacis:

On February 2, 2015, I was pleased to announce my government's next phase for improving Ontario's health care system, *Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care*. This plan builds on achievements made and exemplifies my commitment to put people and patients at the centre of the system. My government will continue to look to Health Quality Ontario (HQO) to support the implementation of key priorities.

Over the past few years, under your leadership and that of the senior team, HQO has established itself as a system advisor on quality. HQO has done so by focusing on the execution of its legislated mandate to develop evidence-based recommendations, support continuous quality improvement and publically report on the health care system. HQO's accomplishments have been commendable, notably your work to:

- support the development of Quality-Based Procedures as a key partner in Health System Funding Reform,
- target quality improvement efforts to support key ministry priorities including the roll out of Quality Improvement Plans, and
- report on the performance of our health system with the release of *Measuring Up*.

HQO has recently served as an advisor upon my direction on a number of critical issues relating to patient safety and quality of care. HQO has also collaborated with organizations across the system to stimulate system-wide transformation. I am encouraged by the outcomes of these partnerships and expect HQO to continue to build on these constructive relationships.

As the government moves forward with the *Patients First* agenda, I would like to clarify HQO's role in the following key areas:

- I am deeply committed to creating a health care system with patients and not just for patients. My goal is to have Ontario recognized globally for its commitment to patient engagement. To that end, HQO will collaborate with the ministry to develop a broad approach for patient engagement that would include, among other things, a definition of patient engagement, examples of best practices, and outcomes and metrics for measuring success.

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Dr. Andreas Laupacis

This work should leverage existing capacity within the system and provide an understanding of where efforts need to be focused, including future work proposed by HQO. I will then direct system partners to undertake work through a coordinated, ministry-led, implementation plan.

- Second, I believe that to function effectively a health system must have transparency. Your mandate to publicly report is an important opportunity to enhance transparency. In support of my government's commitment to transparency, I would like you to support the ministry by working jointly to develop more publicly-accessible access points for Ontario's health safety, quality and performance information. I have asked Dr. Adalsteinn Brown to convene an expert group to provide me with advice on how to move this forward. As data drives performance, I would encourage you in the short term to explore opportunities to report performance information at an appropriately granular level, using information you already have including the Quality Improvement Plans and Quality-Based Procedures.
- Third, I support your increased attention on the recognized quality domain: equity. Data suggests that the failures in quality in our system fall disproportionately on those who are socially, racially or culturally disadvantaged. To this end, I would ask you to consistently enhance your efforts to improve quality in areas consistent with HQO's legislated mandate and recommend evidence-informed, best practices designed to address these inequities in health and health care that are aligned with priority areas set out in *Patients First*.

You have a full mandate to deliver on and are supporting key elements of my agenda (e.g. Integrated Funding, Health Links and the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy). I believe an ambitious plan has been set out and focused attention is required. I am confident that you can deliver on these activities.

Finally, our government is committed to balancing the budget in 2016/17, to that end my government enacted the *Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014*, which included amendments to the *Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014*. Please ensure decisions regarding executive compensation are in line with the spirit and the letter of this legislation.

I would like to thank you and your team for working so hard to advance the quality of patient care in this province. Improving the quality of care delivered and ensuring patients are engaged in the design of our system is fundamental to the success of my agenda. Through partnerships such as ours, we will achieve the commitments outlined in *Patients First: Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care*.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eric Hoskins  
Minister

c: Dr. Joshua Tepper, President & Chief Executive Officer, Health Quality Ontario  
Dr. Robert Bell, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
Ms. Susan Fitzpatrick, Associate Deputy Minister, Health System Delivery and Implementation, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care