

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**April 15, 2019****Healthcare Providers Respond to Auto Reform Announcements with Cautious Optimism**

The Ontario Rehab Alliance (ORA), representing healthcare providers in the auto sector, sees much to applaud in the blueprint to improve the province's auto insurance system presented in the *2019 Budget*.

"On behalf of our seriously injured clients we are thrilled with the return to the higher level of coverage for catastrophic injuries and relieved that this government has protected other accident benefits after years of cuts", says Laurie Davis, Executive Director of the ORA.

The ORA is fully supportive of the blueprint's plan to reduce the regulatory burden on health providers, improve the Independent Medical Examination process and minimize red tape and other obstacles that delay treatment of serious injuries.

The ORA has been advocating for a number of these reforms in their discussions with government over the past months.

"Consumers need to know that they will get the support and treatment they need when they are injured. The right reforms can replace obstacles to care with proactive treatment, retain appropriate checks and balances and reduce disputes without increasing costs. This blueprint suggests we may be heading in the right direction," says Ms. Davis.

The ORA is concerned about the announced intention to lower fees paid to healthcare providers treating accident victims. The association represents primarily small to medium sized providers across the province. Many are already struggling to compete for staff in the labour-short healthcare sector, particularly given the hourly rate freeze in effect since 2012 in the auto sector.

The healthcare association is also concerned about unintended consequences of encouraging claimants to be treated within the insurer's Preferred Provider Network and restricting settlement of the medical-rehabilitation benefit. The ORA is worried that such changes could lead to disproportionate power in the hands of insurers while leaving claimants without recourse or independent oversight to ensure that they are treated fairly.

The association is cautiously optimistic that it can have productive discussions about its concerns and the potentially dire consequences given this government's *Open for Business* focus and looks forward to working with government, insurers and other stakeholders on continuing improvements to the auto insurance system.

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