



## **ISSUE**

An estimated 500,000 people in Ontario are denied health coverage due to their immigration status. This issue can be traced to changes introduced by Ontario's Ministry of Health in 1994, which restricted access to publicly funded healthcare for some of Ontario's most vulnerable residents. More than twenty years later, Canadian immigration policies and admission levels have resulted in over half a million Ontario residents facing gaps in care every year. This includes newly landed immigrants, in-Canada migrants newly approved for permanent residency, newly arrived temporary foreign workers and returning Canadians in the three-month waiting period. It also includes those awaiting responses to inland immigration sponsorship or humanitarian and compassionate applications; temporary foreign workers working part time or between contracts; international students at certain institutions or between visas and non-status residents of Ontario. This results in devastating impacts on individual health, public health, and Ontario's healthcare system.

## **OHIP FOR ALL**

Building on years of community and health sector mobilization, we are calling for a comprehensive policy solution to address this issue. The OHIP for All Campaign brings together numerous public calls for action into a single, province-wide campaign based on the principle that every person has a human right to health care. We call on the Ontario government to provide OHIP for All residents of Ontario.

### **Specifically, the OHIP for All Campaign calls on the Ontario government to:**

- End the OHIP 3 month waiting period for new immigrants, temporary foreign workers, migrants newly approved for permanent residency, and returning Canadians
- Provide OHIP coverage to temporary foreign workers left uninsured between contracts or working part time and international students left uninsured due to the lack of coverage at their institution or being between visas
- Provide OHIP coverage to those left uninsured while responses to inland immigration sponsorship and humanitarian and compassionate applications are pending
- Provide OHIP coverage to those left uninsured due to being non-status while residing in Ontario

## **RATIONALE**

Pregnant women have foregone prenatal care, children have been turned away from emergency rooms, and many others have suffered as a result of delaying seeking care (click [here](#) to see Miguel's story). A growing body of research on the health experiences of the medically uninsured population in Ontario has demonstrated that immigration status is the single most important factor affecting an individual's ability to access health care and their experiences seeking health care (Campbell et al., 2012). Mental health and behavioural problems, pregnancy, and injuries have been identified throughout the literature as among the most prominent health issues of uninsured residents in Ontario (City of Toronto, 2013; Hynie et al., 2016). Uninsured children have also been highlighted as especially vulnerable, as one third of all uninsured residents presenting at emergency rooms are under the age of 16 (Hynie et al., 2016). Delays to diagnosis and treatment of communicable diseases resulting from barriers to accessing care has also been identified as a significant public health concern (Bobadilla, 2016).

**Please visit the [OHIP for All website](#) if you would like to learn more or to sign the open letter.**

## **REFERENCES**

Bobadilla, A., Orchard, T., Magalhaes, L., & Fitzsimmons, D. (2016). Ontario Healthcare Coverage Eligibility Among New Permanent Residents: A Scoping Review. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*. doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2016.1214993

Campbell, R. M., Klei, A. G., Hodges, B. D., Fisman, D., & Kitto, S. (2012). A comparison of health access between permanent residents, undocumented immigrants and refugee claimants in Toronto, Canada. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 16(1): 165-176. doi.org/10.1007/s10903-012-9740-1

City of Toronto. (2013). "Medically uninsured residents in Toronto", prepared by Medical Officer of Health. Toronto, Ont. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-57588.pdf>

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