



PCs cancel professional development fund for health-care professionals

ALLISON SMITH · JANUARY 29, 2020

The PC government is axing a popular fund that allowed health-care providers to upgrade their professional and clinical training, *Queen's Park Today* has learned.

The Allied Health Professional Fund provides up to \$1,500 per year for professional development to members of nine certified health professions, including occupational therapists, lab and radiation technologists, pharmacists and speech-language pathologists, among others.

The fund, which will be wound down on March 2, was designed to encourage health professionals to complete courses or workshops that would bolster their clinical skills and train them to use new technologies.

“As part of our modernization strategy, we are focusing as much funding as possible on front line patient care,” Health Minister **Christine Elliott**'s office said in a statement to *Queen's Park Today* that confirmed the elimination of the

fund.

“Going forward, we will be working with health system partners in allied health, including professional associations, to identify the best ways to support the continuing education of the entire allied health workforce, including the design of any future programs,” Elliott’s office said.

Greg Toffner, president and CEO of the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences, said axing the fund sends the message the government doesn’t consider allied professionals to be frontline health-care workers, which “couldn’t be further from the truth.”

“Our members see patients in acute care facilities across the province and do the diagnosis before they are even treated,” said Toffner, who is also a co-chair of the fund, in an interview with *Queen’s Park Today*. “They don’t value the benefits our members are bringing to the system.”

He said his organization’s members, who conduct x-rays, ultrasounds and MRIs and administer radiation therapy to cancer patients, rely on the funding to learn how to operate new technologies, which are being upgraded on a regular basis in health-care facilities across the province.

In 2017-18, the fund doled out \$3,482,370, an average of \$546 per professional that accessed it, according to Toffner.

He called that “a drop in the bucket” when it comes to the

province's overall health-care budget.

Eliminating the fund, which has been in place for 13 years, will have “a direct impact on health care, technology and procedures that are being performed on patients,” he said, adding that he hopes the PCs reverse their decision.

Tiff Blair, spokesperson for the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, told *Queen's Park Today* the government is also examining some existing funding programs for nurses, but has not made any changes yet.

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