

Sept 9, 2026

Subject: Minimizing the Negative Effects of Postpartum Depression (PPD)

Hon. Doug Ford

Premier

doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

Hon. Sylvia Jones

Minister of Health

sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org

Dear Premier Ford and Hon. Jones,

I am writing on behalf of CFUW Ontario Council, a provincial organization with 48 clubs across Ontario and over 4,700 members. CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women) is a voluntary, self-funded, non-profit, non-partisan women's organization whose members seek to provide life-long learning, to improve public policy and to advocate for gender equality and for the rights of women and girls.

According to CMHA Ontario (2025), approximately 23% of Canadian women experience symptoms of postpartum depression (PPD) following childbirth. Mothers may also face severe symptoms related to anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychosis (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2025). The etiology of PPD is multifaceted, involving biological influences, such as rapid fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone post-delivery, alongside psychological and social factors. While pre-existing mental health conditions increase vulnerability, additional stressors such as financial hardship, inadequate social support, and difficult life circumstances further heighten risk (BMC Women's Health, 2024).

Addressing PPD requires comprehensive interventions, including early screening, accessible mental health services, social support networks, and targeted public policy initiatives. However, systemic barriers hinder effective care. High costs, limited healthcare access, and social biases within the medical system restrict access to emerging treatments for moderate to severe PPD (Biogen, 2025; Zafar, 2025). Furthermore, logistical hurdles like lack of childcare or transportation—coupled with fears of scrutiny from child protective services or immigration authorities—often deter mothers from seeking help. Overcoming these barriers is essential to ensuring equitable, timely care for all mothers.

We urge the Ontario Government through the Ministry of Health (as well as the Ontario Medical Association) to minimize the negative effects of postpartum depression (PPD) by enhancing postpartum public health supports and services through:

- Developing educational campaigns directed at the public and healthcare providers to increase awareness of PPD – its symptoms, treatment options, reducing stigma, and encouraging those affected to seek help,

- Integrating routine mental health screenings into prenatal and postpartum care to allow for early diagnosis and intervention,
- Conducting research on perinatal and postpartum mental illness, and related maternal mortality, to better understand the long-term impacts of untreated perinatal and postpartum mental health conditions,
- Funding research on treatments to establish evidence-based therapies for PPD to enhance safety, effectiveness, and accessibility,
- Providing equitable access to specialized evidence-based treatments, medical care and programs for both mental and physical health during pregnancy and after, for all women, including underserved groups such as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrants, and women in poverty, as well as their families.

Thank you for your time and for prioritizing the mental health and well-being of mothers across Ontario. We urge you to take decisive action to expand access to maternal mental health care, dismantle existing systemic barriers, and ensure every mother receives the support she needs.

Yours sincerely,

S. Shaw

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