



COMMIT TO CARE

**3 Urgent Actions Needed to Bolster Resilience of Ontario's
Home and Community Care Sector and Guarantee Ontarians
the Ability to Obtain Services Where They Want**

**Information for Candidates
in the 2022 Ontario Election**

OCSA **30**
Ontario Community
Support Association 1992-2022

SUMMARY

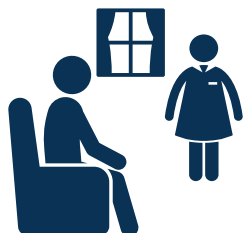
People want to receive care at home and in their communities. They want government to enable them to make this choice by making investment in home and community care a priority.

97% of Ontarians believe it is important to improve access to home and community care.¹



Home and community care services prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and alleviate pressure on long-term care (LTC) by providing care to clients in a home based or community setting as opposed to institutional care.

8% of newly admitted residents to long-term care in Ontario could have been kept at home with the right supports in place.²



In January 2022, **over 560 people** were in hospital waiting to be discharged back to their home but were still in hospital because of a lack of home and community care.³



Home and community care includes three large service areas: home care, community support, and independent living. Each is unique and equally important to the well-being of our health care system. They all require funding and support to provide crucial care for more than one million Ontarians.

The sector cares for diverse clients of all ages and ethnocultural backgrounds, with needs ranging from mild to high, including persons on dialysis and ventilators. Services for clients span in-home nurses, wound care, rehabilitation, adult day programs, assisted living programs, toileting and bathing, meal preparation, transportation to medical appointments and much more.

As a province we must prioritize home and community care so that the sector may continue to serve hundreds of thousands of our most vulnerable Ontarians, who without support, will be left with nowhere to turn for care but hospitals and long-term care homes.



\$730 per day
Cost of long-term care patient in hospital

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES ARE THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO DELIVER SERVICES.



\$201 per day
Cost of comparable service in long-term care



\$103 per day
Cost of client receiving home and community care

When properly funded, home and community care is the link that enables a seamless and integrated health system where clients and their caregivers receive equitable care, and where providers work collaboratively to ensure resources are appropriately utilized. Without a properly funded and supported home and community care sector there cannot be a high performing health care system and integrated care delivery.

This election we are asking candidates to Commit to Care by taking these 3 urgent actions to build a health and social care system that protects millions of Ontarians by:

1

Increasing the volume of home and community care services to ensure we can deliver care where the majority of Ontarians want to receive it and reduce demand for more expensive forms of care.

2

Investing in the infrastructure of home and community care organizations to empower them to meet local needs, upgrade their technology and properly support volunteers.

3

Implement wage parity for home and community care staff and develop a system wide health human resource plan.



INCREASES TO CANADA'S PROVINCIAL
HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE SPENDING
FROM 2016-2021⁴

QUEBEC

59%

ONTARIO

19%

OTHERS

30%*

**Average*

ACTION 1:

Increase the volume of home and community care services to ensure we can deliver care where the majority of Ontarians want to receive it and reduce demand for more expensive forms of care.

Currently, thousands of people are receiving care in settings that are not the most appropriate or the most cost effective.

For example, in 2019-20, there were 1.3 million hospital bed days used by ALC patients in Ontario, meaning they could have been cared for in another setting had the services been available. At the end of January 2022, there were 567 people still in hospital waiting to be discharged home with home care service. This lack of capacity in the home and community care sector cost the province an additional \$355,509 a day. If nothing is done this will cost the province an additional \$129 million over the course of the year.⁵

A report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information confirms that 8% of newly admitted residents to long-term care in Ontario could have been kept at home with the right supports in place.

That means over 8,000 Ontarians could have stayed home and received the necessary supports in their communities.⁶

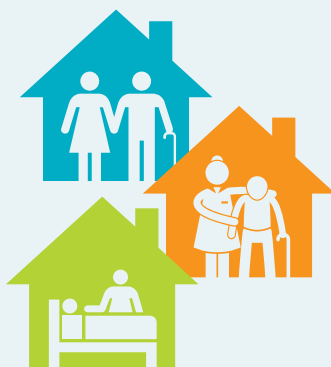
COVID-19 has placed significant strain on the health care system, resulting in substantial surgical backlogs. It is estimated by the Financial Accountability Office that by September 2022, there will be over 419,000 procedures in the backlog.⁷ The only way the province will be able to eliminate this backlog is with appropriate home and community care support.

To reduce the use of more expensive forms of care and ensure people receive care in the most appropriate setting, the home and community care sector requires investments and greater integration with other health service sectors. The ideal future includes appropriately resourced and financed access to a full range of home and community services which support health promotion, preventative services, and re-enablement. By properly leveraging all home and community care services, the sector can be efficient at keeping people healthy in the community and helping them return home sooner after a hospital stay.

Innovative models such as partnerships with primary care for home visits, leveraging local search and rescue volunteers to deliver meals on wheels during the pandemic, expanding the scope of assisted living services through nursing supports and hub and spoke delivery, and the use of technology to enable remote virtual adult day programs, are just some examples of how home and community services and programs have a huge impact every day on the lives of one million Ontarians and their caregivers. With additional supports more can be done.

We are asking all candidates and parties to commit to expanding the home and community care sector and its programs to provide services where people want to receive them and reduce demand on LTC and hospitals.

89% of Ontarians believe the province needs to increase support to help seniors live in their own homes for as long as possible without being forced to move to long-term care.⁸



91% of seniors would prefer to stay at home if they were on a waitlist for a long-term care facility, and additional supports could be provided to keep them at home or living with a family member.⁹

ACTION 2:

Invest in the infrastructure of home and community care organizations to empower them to meet local needs, upgrade their technology and properly support volunteers.

Most community organizations delivering these essential services have not received a cost-of-living increase in nearly a decade. Some have only received a small base increase in the last few years. Recent inflation pressures of nearly five percent have quickly taken up any small increases some providers had received.

Providers can't continue to support the same number of vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities based on pre-pandemic base funding levels. Service cuts, increased client fees or longer waitlists are all options being considered if no action is taken.

COVID-19 has increased the costs of service delivery for home and community care providers, especially due to additional PPE related costs and other operational requirements as dictated by public health measures. Investment is needed to alleviate these costs, and to modernize technology and empower these providers, allowing them to optimize organizational capacity and prevent service disruption.

Most community support service organizations are partially funded, and many of the programs supporting vulnerable Ontarians are served by volunteers. This is cost effective to the system; however, it is increasingly more challenging to find volunteers to support programs such as Meal on Wheels.

Ontario's most vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities are currently facing extraordinary levels of food insecurity and the demand for Meals on Wheels grew by **46%** during the pandemic.

Volunteer recruitment and retention plans for the sector must be a priority of the elected government to ensure these cost-effective programs remain stable.

While some key innovations such as centralized intake and online referrals, remote client monitoring, and online volunteer management programs have been implemented across the sector, many organizations have not been funded to implement newer digital technologies. The province should invest in the sector's digital capacity to improve access and enhance coordination of services, to support client communication, remote monitoring, and digital care delivery, and increase accountability and measuring outcomes.

Our not-for-profit community organizations can only meet the needs of their communities if they are properly funded and equipped with up-to-date technology. We are asking all parties and candidates to commit to a long-term funding plan for not-for-profit home and community care organizations to empower them to meet the needs of their communities, better utilize technology, and properly support volunteers.

**SURVEY
OF OCSA
MEMBERS**



55%

will need to decrease service volumes for provincially funded programs if they do not receive a funding increase this year.



55%

will increase client fees.

68%

will create or expand a waitlist.



ACTION 3:

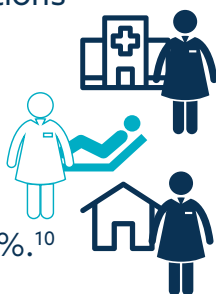
Implement wage parity for home and community care staff and develop a system wide health human resource plan.

Our member organizations can no longer maintain current service levels without adequate staffing. According to an OCSA membership survey from December 2020 and December 2021, vacancies of key frontline positions of Personal Support Workers (PSWs), Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) and Registered Nurses (RNs) have more than doubled. The survey found that there are approximately 7,600 vacant positions across the sector.

Across the three frontline positions (PSWs, RN, RPNs),

17.4% of positions are vacant.

This is **more than double** last year's survey results of 6.8%.¹⁰



Home and community care staff are leaving the sector in droves, many to other sectors where there are incentivized opportunities to shore up similar roles. Wage parity is critical and an important way to ensure the retention of staff in the home and community care sector. Without appropriate staffing across all positions, the ability to keep clients prematurely out of long-term care, keep emergency room visits to a minimum, as well as the ability to clear hospital post-surgical backlogs becomes increasingly challenging, if not impossible.

Ontarians believe front-line staff, including those in home and community care, deserve to be paid equitable compensation as compared to other sectors.

The recent provincial increase on wages for PSWs and nursing retention programs recognized the value that these workers bring to the millions of Ontarians receiving home and community care. This is an important first step in closing the wage gap between critical workforces in healthcare. The announcement increased the starting wage from \$16.50/hour to \$19.50/hour but does little to close the gap between the sectors.

Even with this increase, PSWs in the home and community care sector are making on average approximately 21% less than PSWs in the hospital sector and 17% less than PSWs in the long-term care sector. Nurses in the home and community care sector are also paid lower in comparison to the hospital sector. The median salary wage gap for RNs working in home care versus hospitals is \$11.00 an hour.

Ontario needs a comprehensive health human resource strategy that includes funding for home and community care as part of the overall continuum of care in our province. We must build capacity across all sectors so we can meet the growing demand for services that keep people living well at home and in their communities.

Due to these high vacancy rates and wide wage gap, we are asking all parties and candidates to commit to implementing wage parity for home and community care workers and the development of a system wide health human resource plan.

83% of Ontarians support wage parity across sectors for nurses.

82% of Ontarians support wage parity across sectors for PSWs.¹¹





CONCLUSION

To meet the needs and preferences of Ontarians, the province must invest in and leverage the home and community care sector. Supporting the sector ensures that the 91% of Ontarians who want to remain at home for as long as possible can do so, and it is the only way that we will clear the backlog of nearly half a million surgical procedures.¹² This is why we are asking all candidates and parties to Commit to Care and to taking these 3 urgent actions:

1

Increasing the volume of home and community care services to ensure we can deliver care where the majority of Ontarians want to receive it and reduce demand for more expensive forms of care.

2

Investing in the infrastructure of home and community care organizations to empower them to meet local needs, upgrade their technology and properly support volunteers.

3

Implement wage parity for home and community care staff and develop a system wide health human resource plan.



Sources:

1. Alzheimer Society of Ontario Survey. Yorkville Strategies Inc., March 2022.
2. Bringing Long-Term Care Home, National Institute on Ageing, 2020.
3. OCSA calculation based on OHA COVID-19 Hospital Capacity: Update, January 2022.
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5. OCSA calculation based on OHA COVID-19 Hospital Capacity: Update, January 2022.
6. Canadian Institute for Health Information. Hospitalization, Surgery and Newborn Statistics, 2019-2020.
7. Financial Accountability Office, Health Sector Spending Shortfall, May 2021.
8. Alzheimer Society of Ontario Survey. Yorkville Strategies Inc. March 2022.
9. Home Care Ontario. Home care study. Campaign Research. September 2021.
10. OCSA Survey on Staff Vacancy Rates, February 2022.
11. Alzheimer Society of Ontario Survey, Completed by Yorkville Strategies Inc. March 2022.
12. Home Care Ontario. Home care study. Campaign Research. September 2021.

About OCSA

For thirty years, The Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA) has represented over 220 not-for-profit organizations that provide home care and community support services to over one million Ontarians. Our members help seniors and people with disabilities live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. These proactive and cost-effective services improve quality of life and prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, emergency room visits and premature institutionalization. They are the key to a sustainable health care system for Ontario.

For more information, visit www.ocsa.on.ca