

Ontario Home Care Association

Submission to the Ontario Ministry of Finance
January 8, 2008



The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA) endorses Ontario’s vision of “a health care system that helps keep people healthy, gets them good care when they are sick and will be there for our children and grandchildren”.¹ To that end, the OHCA advocates for the funding and resourcing of a strong publicly funded home care system in Ontario. In this system, individual home care service plans are determined by local Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) and delivered through frontline service providers chosen through a transparent procurement process.

In addition to government sponsored care, the OHCA believes in the vital contribution of home care organizations which deliver important services necessary to support the client and family caregiver outside the publicly funded and administered system.

Ontario’s growing active senior population is a testament to a progressive health care system and to our success as a society. It is also the foundation of one of the greatest health care priorities facing our province - the need to respond to seniors’ expectations to live and age independently in their own homes. While seniors of the future are predicted to be among the healthiest in history, it is also known that the likelihood of developing chronic conditions increases with age and can compromise the prospect of independence.

“By some estimates, two in every three dollars go to the treatment of chronic conditions...”
*Andre Picard, Globe & Mail,
December 20, 2007*

The shift in population demographic will further compound the health human resource shortages experienced today. This will necessitate improved integration of care across health care sectors and innovative approaches to support care at home in order to enhance capacity. The decentralized and mobile work force is one of the key defining characteristics of home and community care. Technology solutions to support the capacity of the home care professional are rapidly emerging and must be adopted to enable care delivery in the home.

¹ Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Vision Statement 2005

Recognizing these health system drivers, the Ontario government has initiated important investments in home and community care; most recently the Aging at Home strategy. The OHCA welcomes this policy direction and offers the following recommendations to sustain the momentum toward a system that places high priority on care at home and in the community:

1. ***Continue the investment and commit to stabilized funding to the home and community care sector*** so that Ontarians can exercise the option to *age at home* safely with adequate publicly funded health care support. This will require that the government:
 - a. Continue the integration of health system partners with a focus on moving to the provision of non-acute care in the community and establishing a broader mandate for home care within primary care and illness prevention.
 - b. Support the continued financial analysis of the continuum of health care in order to order to establish guidelines for the appropriate balance of public funds to enable Ontarians to live and age successfully in their own homes and communities. OHCA encourages the government to continue its work using tools such as the “Ontario Health-Based Allocation Model”; and in so doing include the financial implications of the unique and integral contribution of family / informal caregivers on which the home care system is heavily reliant.
 - c. Promote collaborative initiatives that involve service providers from across all sectors within the health care system.
 - d. Fund the implementation of innovative technology applications to support care delivery at home recognizing that there are solutions to increase staff efficiency and effectiveness and solutions to enhance capacity through remote monitoring.
 - e. Institute multi-year CCAC funding to support the increased reliance on home care service in response to system reform demands (acute care relief, chronic disease management, chronic elder care, aging at home and palliative care).

2. **Provide direct funding to home and community care frontline service providers so that they can immediately implement Ontario's new statutory holiday - Family Day.** This is necessary as home care providers are funded based on their projected costs established at the initiation of a contract to provide services to the Community Care Access Centre. Providers would not have factored costs (including increased wage, administrative increases to support care, travel costs associated with decreased municipal bus services etc) into their cost estimates.

3. **Establish a timeline to ensure expeditious implementation of information technology** to enable data capture and more efficient care delivery by all members of the health team.

The Association urges the government to communicate their support for a well resourced home and community care sector in the 2008 Budget. Implementation of these recommendations will be instrumental to ensuring that the home and community care sector can effectively support the realization of Ontarians' goal to remain independent at home for as long as possible.

The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA), *the voice of home care in Ontario*, is an organization of home health and social care service providers. Association members deliver nursing care, home support services, personal care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, dietetics, speech language therapy and medical equipment and supplies in the home. Ontario Home Care Association members are contracted by all three levels of government, Community Care Access Centres, insurance companies, institutions, corporations and private individuals. OHCA members are accredited through the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) and/or the International Standards Association (ISO).

For more information, contact:
Susan D. VanderBent, BA, BSW, MSW, MHSc, CHE
Executive Director, Ontario Home Care Association
Phone: 905-543-9474 Fax: 905-545-1568
e-mail: suevan@homecareontario.ca

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