

Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors

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Ontario is taking action to make sure that all seniors are able to access the support they need at every stage of their life.

Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors empowers people to make the choices that are right for them when it comes to their care, their independence, and how they access government services - whether that's finding ways to keep up an active lifestyle or getting the support needed to live at home longer.

Supporting Seniors at All Stages

All seniors, regardless of their needs, want a high quality of life – one that maximizes their health, safety, and connections with family, friends and community. The following actions are designed to help all seniors, no matter where they live in the province, to age well and confidently:

Easy-to-find information: A "one-stop" website (Ontario.ca/AgingWell) has been developed where seniors can find information about tax credits, drug coverage, powers of attorney, recreation programs and more. People can also get this information by phone at 1-888-910-1999 or by calling 211 – which offers information 24 hours a day in over 150 languages.

Better community transportation: Ontario will make it easier for seniors who live in communities currently underserved by public transportation to connect them with the services and supports they need. In recognition of challenges faced by those living in northern communities in particular, services in Northern Ontario will also be improved.

More age-friendly communities: Ontario will expand the successful Age-Friendly Community Planning grant program by providing \$7 million over three years and by including a new implementation stream to make communities more accessible and inclusive for seniors of all ages and abilities. The province has already supported the creation of 85 age-friendly communities, including investing \$1.5 million in 2015-17 for 56 projects to help local governments and organizations plan for more age-friendly communities.

Free high-dose flu vaccine: An annual influenza vaccine is the best defence against the flu and its complications. Beginning in the 2018-19 flu season, Ontario will invest \$17 million per year to

provide a high-dose influenza vaccine, targeted to protect seniors, which will be available free of charge as part of the Ontario Universal Influenza Immunization Program.

Enhance Education about Powers of Attorney: Ontario will invest \$1 million over three years in a public education campaign to raise awareness among seniors of how important – and easy – it is to set up Powers of Attorney and to encourage them to choose who can make personal care and financial decisions on their behalf, if necessary. Over one-third of seniors have not designated a trusted power of attorney. As part of this campaign, easy-to-use and accessible resource materials, including a revised Power of Attorney (POA) document and information about how people can prevent POA misuse, will be made available on Ontario.ca/AgingWell.

Expansion of consumer protection programs for seniors: Ontario will launch a consumer protection pilot program aimed at protecting seniors' hard-earned money through education and awareness, as well as through enhanced assistance and intervention programs for seniors who have fallen victim to consumer threats or scams.

Strengthening elder abuse prevention: Ontario will continue to prevent and respond to elder abuse with a new investment of \$6.7 million over three years, to deliver public education, service provider training, research, and improved community response, to better support abused older adults. This also includes dedicated efforts to address violence against older women, and support older people in Indigenous communities.

Supporting Seniors Living Independently in the Community

Seniors are living longer and more actively than ever before. Many will remain independent at home and in their communities, and many will want new opportunities to learn or to meet new people or to plan for the future. The following actions will help seniors remain independent, healthy, and active in their communities:

More Seniors Active Living Centres: Ontario is investing \$8 million over three years to create 40 more Seniors Active Living Centres, bringing the total to more than 300 Centres provincially. These popular community hubs provide seniors with a range of social, recreational and wellness programs, as well as educational and support services.

More community engagement opportunities: Ontario is investing \$11 million over three years to extend and enhance the Seniors Community Grant Program to support larger projects that will benefit more seniors over a longer term. Since 2014, Ontario has funded over 1,300 grassroots projects in hundreds of communities that have helped more than 435,000 seniors to learn, volunteer and be socially involved.

Staying physically strong: Ontario is investing \$3.5 million over three years to support community programs that provide recreational activities for older adults, to help up to 20,000 more people prolong their physical and mental health, stay mobile and reduce the risk of falls.

Engaging seniors through the arts: Engagement with the arts can reduce isolation, promote self-confidence and build a sense of community. Ontario will invest \$10 million over two years to support professional arts programming and art therapy for seniors in community settings such as Seniors Active Living Centres, retirement homes, hospitals, and long-term care homes, as well as build capacity for seniors to engage in arts organizations in their communities.

Helping seniors with technology: Ontario is investing \$600,000 over two years in its Change the World program to launch a special project to link youth volunteers with seniors to help seniors build their understanding and enable their use of technology.

Supporting seniors to become mentors: Ontario will establish a senior-youth mentorship program through an investment of \$4 million over two years, to help build relationships and encourage knowledge sharing between generations. This will support 20 to 30 projects across the province.

Supporting Seniors Requiring Enhanced Supports at Home and in their Communities

The vast majority of people want to stay at home as they grow older, but many will eventually require some form of assistance from either family members or friends, or more formal care services and supports, to remain at home. The following actions will help to support them:

Support for more naturally occurring retirement communities: Ontario will invest more than \$15 million over two years to continue supporting "naturally occurring" retirement communities, such as apartment buildings or housing developments where many seniors already live close to one another. The province will work with Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to support seniors who live near each other by providing more on-site services to meet seniors' needs, including culturally appropriate care. These types of communities promote social interaction and fight isolation, allow residents to stay in their homes longer and enjoy a higher quality of life and a greater level of independence.

Increased in-home health care: Ontario is investing \$3 million over two years to improve seniors' access to house-calls by expanding the existing program beyond physicians to include additional healthcare providers such as social workers, therapists and nurses. This will cut down on the need for seniors to travel to their healthcare provider when they are ill and help them stay healthy in the comfort of their own home.

Increasing access to geriatric care: Ontario will strengthen the healthcare workforce's ability to provide specialized care in geriatrics through a \$5.5 million investment over two years to increase training opportunities for healthcare providers, including physicians, personal support workers and nurse practitioners.

Providing more home care hours: Ontario is expanding home care across Ontario. Seniors requiring home care will benefit from an estimated 2.6 million additional hours this year, including personal support services, nursing, physical and speech therapy, and respite services for caregivers.

Expanding seniors supportive housing: Ontario is providing support and rehabilitation to 1,700 people who are ready to leave hospital, but need some additional assistance before they can return home, with over 500 new transitional care spaces. The province is also helping seniors who require assistance with health care or activities of daily living, such as bathing or meal preparation, and cannot afford to live independently, by providing 200 new subsidies to better access affordable housing as well as home and community care supports.

Increasing support for caregivers: Ontario is launching a new province-wide organization to provide caregivers with supports and resources, including a single point of access for information in areas such as training in multiple languages, local programs and peer support.

Making the quality of care more consistent: Ontario is introducing new guidelines for home care assessment and planning based on the level of care needed by the individual and their caregivers. This will provide more predictability in the home care hours that seniors can expect to receive, and ensure they get the most appropriate care and greater consistency in the way home care services are delivered, no matter where they live in the province.

Helping people with dementia: Ontario is investing more than \$100 million over three years to improve access to quality care for people living with dementia and their care partners, including expanding and enhancing existing services such as community dementia programs. More than 194,000 people in Ontario currently live with dementia, and the number is expected to rise to over 300,000 over the next two decades.

Enhancing self-directed care: Ontario is creating new, innovative self-directed care models to provide eligible clients and caregivers with more control over their care. This will include the establishment of a new personal support services organization in early 2018.

Supporting Seniors Requiring Intensive Supports

Some seniors with complex needs caused by cognitive and physical decline, and conditions such as dementia, will require a higher level of support as they age. Many will require ongoing and intensive care that is currently provided in long-term care homes. The following actions will help to support them:

Modernizing long-term care homes: Ontario is eliminating all four-bed wards in the province's long-term care homes by 2025, by supporting the redevelopment of more than 30,000 existing long-term care beds in more than 300 homes. Residents will benefit from increased privacy, better sleep, safety and comfort, with environments that enable the delivery of better care.

Reducing the wait for long-term care: Ontario will create 5,000 new long-term care beds by 2021-22, to ensure those with the highest need, as well as those within hospitals who are ready to be discharged and require a long-term care home, have a bed. New beds that serve specific cultural needs, including those of Indigenous populations, will also be prioritized. Over the next decade, Ontario will create over 30,000 new long-term care beds to keep pace with the growing and changing needs of an aging population. These new beds are in addition to the 30,000 existing beds that are being redeveloped.

More staffing and support in long-term care: Ontario will increase the provincial average to four hours of direct care per resident per day to ensure that residents in Ontario's long-term care homes receive the highest quality of care. This will mean an additional 15 million hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care for long-term care residents across Ontario, and will ensure that every long-term care home in the province has staff with specialized training in behavioural supports and in palliative and end-of-life care. Four hours of care will mean increased flexibility around when residents can eat, dress or bathe, reductions in readmission to hospital for minor conditions that can be treated within the home, improved quality of work for staff, and reduction in inappropriate use of anti-psychotics, falls, restraint usage, pressure ulcers, pain and depression.

Promoting innovation in long-term care: Ontario is introducing innovative technologies to all long-term care homes, including supplying all homes with electronic clinical support tools to ensure standardized, high-quality care is delivered to residents with a range of complex diagnoses. The province intends to build on this innovation by introducing virtual consultations with specialists, such as pharmacists.

Culturally appropriate long-term care: In consultation with long-term care providers and residents and families, Ontario will provide more access to culturally appropriate homes, and in-

home supports such as culturally appropriate meal preparation and support in the resident's language of choice.

Strengthening safety for long-term care home residents: Ontario is committed to the safety and security of long-term care residents. On September 27, 2017, the province introduced Bill 160, Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, 2017. This bill, if passed, would strengthen the long-term care inspection and enforcement framework.

Protecting vulnerable seniors: Ontario will invest more than \$10 million over two years to strengthen the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT), which acts as a public guardian for over 13,500 mentally incapable adults and touches the lives of more than 50,000 of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. To better safeguard the interests of these citizens, OPGT will offer improved customer service through the creation of a contact centre, improved information management and modernized service delivery.

Improved end-of-life care: Ontario is partnering with local communities to build more hospice beds across the province. This expansion will provide compassionate palliative and end-of-life care for more than 2,000 additional people and their families each year, closer to home.

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