

# **MORE HOME CARE**

## **ONTARIO NEEDS MORE HOME CARE**

Recommendations for the 2024-25 Ontario Budget

January 2024



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



We have all seen the headlines over the last year - Emergency Department closures, loved ones stuck in hospital, and the ever-expanding wait list for long-term care beds.

## Behind these stories are patients and families struggling to get the care they need.

Ontario's health care system is under strain today, and it is about to get worse.

The number of seniors in Ontario is set to increase by **15 per cent in just the next five years.**<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, when we look at older seniors - those 75 and older - that population will grow by 25.2 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

This will place a tremendous burden on an already strained system, and will cost the health system billions of dollars<sup>3</sup>.

Home Care Ontario is ringing the alarm - Ontario must act now before the health care system begins to crumble under the weight of this growing pressure and is overwhelmed.

1. Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance projections, Population Projections Scenarios for Ontario by Age and Sex, 2022-2046, Summer 2023.  
2. Source: Intellihealth, April 10, 2023  
3. Source: Financial Accountability Officer, Ontario Health Sector: Spending Plan Review, March 2023 <https://fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/health-2023>

Home care is the answer to helping get people the care they need today and ensure Ontario's health care system is ready to meet the looming demographic challenges facing us tomorrow.

The government has acknowledged the importance of home care and invested over \$1 billion to help stabilize the sector after being battered by the pandemic.

That investment has been impactful and resulted in existing home care professionals returning to the sector.

But today's reality is we need to invest more if we are to massively expand our home care workforce to deliver more care where people want it today and tomorrow - at home.

Home care can be scaled up faster than any other part of the system. It is the quickest, most effective way we can give our loved ones the care they deserve and relieve the pressure on overcrowded hospitals.

## Nothing is faster than home care.

With the right supports including improved compensation, training and education, Ontario can massively expand a modernized system to support more seniors with critical health care at home.

<p><b>Symptoms of a Health System Under Strain</b></p> <p>Ontario's health system already struggles to meet current demands of today:</p>	<b>5,500</b> patients in ALC beds
	<b>2.2</b> million Ontarians without a family doctor
	<b>40,000</b> people waiting for long-term care
	<b>50%</b> of current family caregivers are 75+ years of age
	<b>40+</b> hospital emergency department closures in the last 3 years

# RECOMMENDATIONS



Ontario must substantially expand its home care sector over the next three years to support its rapidly growing senior’s population, and increased demand that will come from OHTs.

To achieve this, Home Care Ontario recommends the province increase home care funding by 30% - or \$411M a year, over the next three years to:

**Invest in the Growth of the Home Care Sector**

- Increase funding by \$350M to deliver more care
- Provide incremental targeted base funding increases



**Build the Home Care Workforce**

- Invest \$600M to address the growing wage disparity
- Invest \$59.5M in a new PSW Mentorship Program



**Support Education and Training**

- Retool the PSW Training Fund
- Place a greater focus on Home Care Curricula within PSW curricula
- Create a \$13.5M home care stream in future Skills Development Fund intakes



**Invest in Digital Modernization**

- Invest \$8M to fund the Home Care Ontario/OCSA/OntarioMD Home Care Digital Modernization proposal



**Support Family Funded Home Care**

- Expand the scope of the OSCAH tax credit



# THE DEMOGRAPHIC TSUNAMI HAS BEGUN



For years policy makers have talked about the demographic tsunami that will overtake us. Report after report has showcased the fact that in twenty years Ontario's seniors' population will double, and the effects could be catastrophic.

But we don't have to look to 2043 to see the impact of Ontario's aging population - the tsunami has begun.

**In the next 5 years, Ontario's seniors population will increase by 15 per cent.<sup>1</sup>**

Indeed, when we look at older seniors - those 75 and older - some estimates show that population will grow by +25 per cent by 2027.<sup>2</sup>

That increase alone could overwhelm our already strained health care system.

We owe it to our children, our families, and our seniors act now and be ready.

1. Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance projections, Population Projections Scenarios for Ontario by Age and Sex, 2022-2046, Summer 2023.

2. Source: Intellihealth, April 10, 2023



**Population of Seniors 75+ growing by 25 per cent by 2027.**



# PROVIDING CARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE



Ontario is working to establish Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) across the province to deliver health care at the right time, and in the right place. This work will place an emphasis on providing more care closer to home, utilizing the home care system, meaning that even if the population was static, demand for home care will grow.

Some OHTs will begin to manage home care contracts as early as 2025, and to ensure the success of this transition, the home care system must be ready to meet their increased demand.

It is paramount that Ontario continue to build a strong home care system to provide the care that OHTs will require and to support the growing seniors population.

**“The only thing better than having care close to home is having care in your home.”**

- Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care, 2023



# RECENT INVESTMENTS ARE WORKING - BUT PROGRESS BEING THREATENED

In 2022 Ontario made an historic \$1 Billion investment to support home and community care, which has gone a long way to help stabilize the home care sector from the effects of COVID-19 and begin to reduce the wage disparity between home care and other parts of the health system.

## Progress being threatened

However, in 2023 hospital nurses and many long-term care nurses received an 11 per cent increase.

When added to the two other arbitration awards related to Bill 124 that these sectors received,

Registered Nurses will receive an average increase of 16 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

These arbitration awards in the hospital and LTC sectors have eroded the gains the province has been able to make in addressing the wage disparity, and have set the home care sector further behind in comparable compensation.

**The province must redouble its efforts to make home care a more attractive setting to work.**

1. Source: Ontario Nurses Association, Press Release, July 2023. <https://www.ona.org/news-posts/20230720-hospital-central-decision/#:~:text=The%20arbitrator%27s%20decision%20calls%20the,per%20cent%20over%20two%20years>.

## These investments are working:

- ✓ Weighted average wages for PSS workers, RPNs and RNs have increased since 2021
- ✓ Number of active staff have increased
- ✓ Higher portion of staff are working more than 30 hours a week<sup>1</sup>

1. Source: Home and Community Care Workforce Study



**“Ontario Hospital Nurses, Health-Care Professionals Receive Major Wage Increases”**

Ontario Nurses Association<sup>1</sup>

# SUBSTANTIALLY EXPANDING ONTARIO'S HOME CARE SECTOR



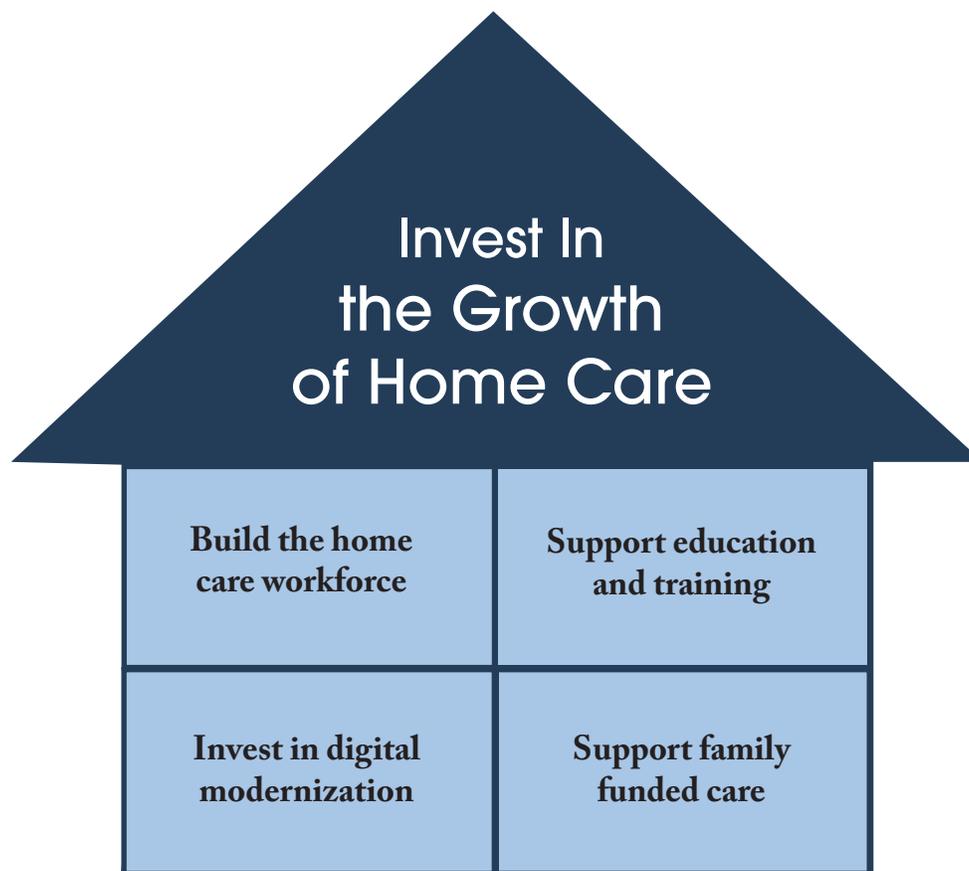
Ontario needs to substantially expand its home care sector over the next three years to support its rapidly growing seniors' population, and the increased demand for home care that will come from OHTs.

And with the right investments - this can happen quickly. Home care can be scaled up faster than any other part of the health system. It is the quickest, most effective way to give our loved ones the care they deserve and relieve pressure on overcrowded hospitals and LTC homes.

## Recommendations

Home Care Ontario makes the following pre-budget recommendations built around one core element – increasing home care funding by 30% - or \$411M a year, over the next three years.

**Within this investment, the government should:**



# INVEST IN THE GROWTH OF THE HOME CARE SECTOR



This should be done by funding additional home care volume, as well as providing an incremental base funding increase to address rising inflationary costs to the sector.

## Recommendations

### Increase funding to deliver more care

The province must invest an additional \$350M over three years to support the delivery of additional home care to Ontarians, including through specialized funding programs. This should involve a \$75M increase next year, a \$100M investment in year two, growing to a \$175M investment in year 3. This funding should include support for increased caregiver respite.

### Treat home care as a system

Home care is an integrated sector, and all elements (nursing, PSS, therapies, infusion pharmacy and medical equipment and supplies) must be supported.

### Provide incremental targeted funding

In addition to funding increased home care volumes, the government should provide a 2.5% base funding increase next year and a 2% increase the following year to address the projected rate of inflation and support rising incremental system costs such as the price of gasoline, PPE and cyber security.



### Cost Savings

As care delivery is realigned toward home care, savings will be achieved, which can be reinvested back into the sector.

Cost of supporting individuals with complex needs:

<b>Home Care</b> Average Cost per Day	<b>\$103</b>
<b>Long-Term Care</b> Average Cost per Day	<b>\$201</b>
<b>Alternate Level Care (ALC)</b> Average Costs per Day <sup>1</sup>	<b>\$730</b>

1. Source: National Institute on Ageing, Bringing Long-Term Care Home, 2022

# BUILD THE HOME CARE WORKFORCE



The government's recent investment towards contract rate increases went a long way to address wage disparity.

However, recent arbitration awards in the hospital and LTC sectors have eroded the recent gains home care was able to make. We must redouble our efforts to make home care the most attractive place to work in health care.

## Recommendations

### Invest \$59.5M in a new PSW Mentorship Program

Working on the front lines of home care is the only part of the health system where staff work alone in people's homes. It can be a highly rewarding career but for new recruits, this solitary environment can be difficult.

To address this, the government should introduce a new peer-to-peer mentorship program for home care similar to that which exists for hospital staff. By pairing new staff with existing staff, the province will help new recruits to feel connected to their teams, and quickly become more comfortable with their jobs.

Investing \$18.5M per year in the first two years would support the retention of up to 5,000 new PSWs with a full-time mentor for the first two weeks of work, and half time for the second two weeks on the job. This program would grow to support 6,100 PSWs by year 3.

### Invest \$600M to address the growing wage disparity

Recent arbitration awards have increased the average wages in other parts of the health system by 11 per cent over two years, and 16 per cent for RNs— this disparity must be addressed.

The government should invest an additional \$600M over the next three years towards contract rate increases, targeted to improve home care compensation for front line staff and those who support them. This funding must apply to all home care services, including nursing, PSS, therapies, infusion pharmacy and medical equipment and supplies, as well as bundled funding programs.

Additionally, the government should examine increased supports for rural and remote home care delivery to address geographical and other differences.



# SUPPORT EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Clinical placement opportunities for home care are limited to congregate settings or sites where there are multiple patients who can be seen at the same location (retirement homes, condos, etc.).

Existing education programs need to be focused equally on home care curricula and new training opportunities need to be created and promoted to grow the home care workforce.

This educational focus on home care will lead to more, better trained home care staff which will increase care, reduce ALC rates, and result in fewer ED visits.

## Recommendations

### Retool the PSW Training Fund

The current PSW training fund must be less restrictive with broader allowances and increased funding to improve the level and amount of training provided to students.

### Place a Greater Focus on Home Care Curricula within PSW Curricula

Specialized curricula for home care must be introduced that is equivalent to the current PSW standard. As well, the nursing and therapy curricula must be expanded to include a focus on home care service delivery and the need for integrated care teams.

### Create a \$13.5M Home Care Stream in Future Skills Development Fund Intakes

The government should dedicate funding in future Skills Development Fund intakes specifically supporting the need for enhanced training of future home care staff.



# INVEST \$8M TOWARDS DIGITAL MODERNIZATION



Home care lacks any consistent or standardized way to digitally connect with other parts of the health system. This means front line clinicians don't have access to the information they need from other parts of the health system and can't share important home care data with other clinicians.

Government must invest to support digital modernization of the home care system to improve patient care and support its health care transformation.

## Recommendations

### Invest \$8M to Fund the Home Care Ontario/ OCSA/OntarioMD Home Care Digital Modernization Proposal

**This project will:**

- Establish an integrated digital infrastructure framework
- Connect providers with the rest of the health care system
- Establish standard information exchange
- Improve health human resource utilization
- Embed clinical pathways
- Create standard information exchange between sectors



# SUPPORT FAMILY FUNDED HOME CARE



More than 150,000 Ontarians are supported by family funded home care every year, spending on average \$17,600 annually on these important services.

The Ontario government should support these seniors and their choice to live at home longer by working with the Federal government to expand the applicability of the Ontario Seniors Care at Home Tax Credit (OSCAH).

## Recommendations

### Expand the scope of the OSCAH tax credit

For an expense to be eligible for the OSCAH it must also qualify for the federal medical expense tax credit. This means that currently seniors must apply and be approved for a disability certificate to have their part-time family funded home care expenses qualify for the tax credit.

While many seniors accessing family funded home care struggle with physical and mental health challenges, many do not necessarily meet CRA's stringent eligibility tests for a disability certificate.

In order to ensure the new OSCAH credit reaches as many Ontario seniors as possible, the province should work with their federal counterparts to eliminate the requirement for a 'disability certificate' to claim part-time attendant care in the home.



# APPENDIX – COSTING



Building on the remaining funds from the historic \$1 Billion in funding provided in the 2022 Budget, Home Care Ontario recommends the following additional focused investments to the home care sector:

## Budget Recommendation Summary:

In Millions

Category of Support	Budget Measure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Grow the Sector	Volume Increase	\$75	\$100	\$175
	Base Funding Increase - 2.5%, 2%	\$100	\$75	-
Build the workforce	Funding for Compensation	\$200	\$200	\$200
	Mentorship Fund	\$18.5	\$18.5	\$22.5
Support education & training	SDF Home Care System	\$13.5	\$13.5	13.5
Invest in digital	Digital Modernization Project	\$4	\$4	-
Support family funded care	Expand the OSCAH TaxCredit	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$411</b>	<b>\$411</b>	<b>\$411</b>