



November 29, 2019

The Honourable Rod Phillips  
Minister of Finance  
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### **Re: Submission to the 2020 Pre-Budget Hearings**

Care Watch is pleased to provide input to the Pre-Budget Hearings. We are a not-for-profit volunteer-run advocacy organization led by senior citizens. Our goal is that Ontario's seniors receive the services they need to live safely at home and thrive in their communities. Our input therefore relates to the funding of in-home and community support services.

These services are the first line of support for both seniors and the health care system. When seniors are supported in their homes, they are less likely to appear in emergency rooms or to end up in long-term care. Decreasing preventable emergency room visits can help put a stop to hallway health care – which we, like you, deplore. Decreasing preventable admissions to long-term care homes can relieve pressure on current beds as well as on the new beds being built.

In-home and community support services cover a wide range – from personal support and home help to transportation, adult day programs, social and recreational opportunities, and programs to promote health and prevent illness. They are delivered by both volunteers and professionals. Examples include personal support workers, nurses, day care assistants, and respite care workers. Costs are usually modest and often shared by the consumer and the agency delivering the service.

Budget increases for in-home and community services haven't kept pace with the growth in Ontario's population of seniors.<sup>1</sup> We welcomed the modest increases after almost a decade of flat-lined budgets, but they are not enough to compensate for years of neglect. They also cannot meet government's intention to expand access and shift care from acute and long-term settings to the community.

Most home and community care providers are not-for-profit organizations. When government funding is insufficient, they are forced to increase client fees, reduce services, or both.

**Care Watch recommends that in-home care and community support services receive the following new funding to their base budgets:**

- **A 3% annual increase to bring their funding into line with funding to institutions;**
- **An additional 2% annual increase so these services can grow province-wide; and**
- **Annual adjustments for inflation.**

**We further recommend that this funding be designated for in-home and community support services and be protected so it can be used only for these purposes.**

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• *Not-for-Profit.* • *Volunteer-Run.* • *Senior-Led.*

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In addition, the community service sector has too few qualified front-line workers – personal support workers, nurses, and other care providers. Current workers face difficult and precarious working conditions. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain enough of them to deliver care.

**Care Watch recommends that the relevant ministries cooperate to develop and implement a comprehensive health human resources strategy to build a pool of qualified care providers in the community sector.**

Hospitals, physicians, and other medically-based services need and deserve support, but they are not the only way to meet the needs of an ageing population. Older Ontarians need what will help them maintain their independence. Private sector retirement homes are financially out of reach for many of us, so ageing at home becomes the only option.<sup>2</sup> Community support services can delay, and even avoid, the need for care in emergency rooms, hospitals, and long-term care homes. They complement government's investments in these more expensive and specialized resources, so are therefore a prudent investment.<sup>3</sup>

Ontario's health care structures are evolving. We don't yet know how these changes will affect in-home and community support services. We assert, however, that these services are integral to our health care system and that other elements of the system depend on them. We therefore advocate that they: 1) be included in the core services the Ontario Health Teams provide; and 2) receive sufficient dedicated funding within any structures Ontario adopts.

As your government plans the funding of health and home care services over the next few months, we urge you to consider adequate and secure funding for in-home and community support services.

Sincerely,



Michèle Harding, Chair

c.c. Honourable Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance  
 Honourable Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health  
 Honourable Merilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care  
 Honourable Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility  
 Honourable Doug Ford, Premier

<sup>1</sup> *The Ministry of Finance's Ontario Population Projections Update, 2015–2041, shows that the number of seniors has grown significantly – in pure numbers and relative to other age groups – so that, in 2015, for the first time, the proportion of individuals 65 and over exceeded the number of children 14 and under. In 2015, Ontario had 2.2 million seniors - 16% of the population.*

<sup>2</sup> *Care Watch, the Ontario government, and the LHINs, among others, have consulted with seniors over the past two decades. Seniors were overwhelmingly adamant that they want to live at home in the community for as long as possible.*

<sup>3</sup> *Bridging Policy and Research in Eldercare. Norah C. Keating, Janet E. Fast, Ingrid A. Connidis, Margaret Penning and Janice Keefe. Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques. Vol. 23, Special Joint Issue: Aging / Vieillesse (Spring, 1997), pp. 22-41.*