



Steps to Community Support Sustainability

**Strengthening Client Care
By Investing In Providers**



OCSA
Ontario Community Support Association

An Update for LHINs Regarding the Sustainability of Community Support Services in Ontario

As the LHINs take on new roles and responsibilities in Ontario's health care system, and as the need for home and community care continues to grow, now is the ideal time to take steps to strengthen the supports clients and caregivers rely on.

The sector has reached a critical juncture where the progress of the past few years is seriously threatened by a lack of investment in the capacity and sustainability of the not-for-profit organizations that provide these services.

The 2017 Ontario Budget included an \$18 million investment earmarked for community support services. We have been told that the new provincial funding will be distributed according at each LHIN's discretion. Based on the experiences of our members across the province, we strongly recommend that LHINs use these funds to invest in the community-based organizations that provide these vital services.

In recent years, the bulk of investment in home and community care has gone to CCAC home care services, though there have been some investments in expanding community support services. These investments created much-needed and extremely valuable adult day program spaces, opened up assisted living spots and increased the wages of personal support workers - though it still hasn't been enough to keep up with demand across the province.

However, recently these types of investments channeled directly into new service hours were not accompanied by an increase in base operational funding to service providers. **Many providers are facing their seventh consecutive year with no increase to base operational funding.** This has resulted in agencies having to limit access by creating waitlists and increasing client fees. Now, with funding falling well behind the rate of inflation, many of them are reaching a breaking point.

It is time to shift our approach to funding the community support services sector, with an eye towards both expanding services and building the capacity of these agencies to meet ever-growing and changing need in a more sustainable way, now and into the future.

As part of the \$250 million invested in home and community care this year, the provincial budget announced \$18 million in new funding for community support services. Unlike home care funding, which was designated to expand and enhance services, the province did not specifically direct these new funds to either service increases or operational base budgets, leaving this to the discretion of each LHIN. The 2017 budget also included \$100 million over three years to support the dementia strategy, including funds earmarked specifically for service expansion.

This is a key opportunity to strengthen community support services by allocating new funds to the base budgets of community-based, not-for community care providers.



Stronger Providers Equal Stronger Care

Community support services have undergone a period of rapid growth, and we are proud to see the emergence of innovative technologies, creative models of care, and improvements in patient satisfaction and outcomes. However, funding limitations are causing community support services providers to miss out on opportunities to modernize and innovate, and struggle to build capacity at the rate necessary to keep up with demand.

Without sufficient base funding increases, the ever-increasing costs of supplies and utilities has resulted in many organizations having to decrease service levels, inappropriately raise client fees for needed programs, and defer important maintenance and training. These difficult decisions have resulted in longer wait times for services, and have a serious impact on both the volume and quality of care provided to clients. Raising client fees also has a negative impact on access for the most vulnerable.

The sector is also struggling to attract and retain the staff they need to continue to provide the highest quality care. Compared to other sectors, many community support service agencies find themselves at a significant disadvantage in terms of compensation.

A modest increase in base funding would enable providers to innovate or create efficiencies by investing in technology, to retain and train staff, and to invest in quality improvement initiatives. These steps are vital if we are to maintain and expand levels of service, and to keep up with the changing face of health care. Yet only three of Ontario's 14 LHINs have recognized this important challenge and allocated a base increase in the past two years.

Pressures related to base budgets escalate quickly, and even a short period of time without a base funding increase can lead to HSPs falling behind. **Additional base funding freezes will jeopardize the gains of the past several years, threaten the quality of care clients receive, limit the value home and community care offers to the health system as a whole, and risk Ontario falling behind standards set in other jurisdictions.**

As the role of the LHINs expands, now is the perfect time to take action to protect and strengthen community support services. Please help ensure these vital services remain available to all Ontarians by supporting the community organizations that provide them.

We hope you will meet with your community support services providers for further details on the impact of base funding shortages, and to understand how additional base funding would be used to benefit clients and caregivers.

We would also be very pleased to meet with you directly to provide additional information on the needs and opportunities of the home and community support sector, from a provincial perspective.

Thank you for your consideration,



Deborah Simon, CEO

Ontario Community Support Association

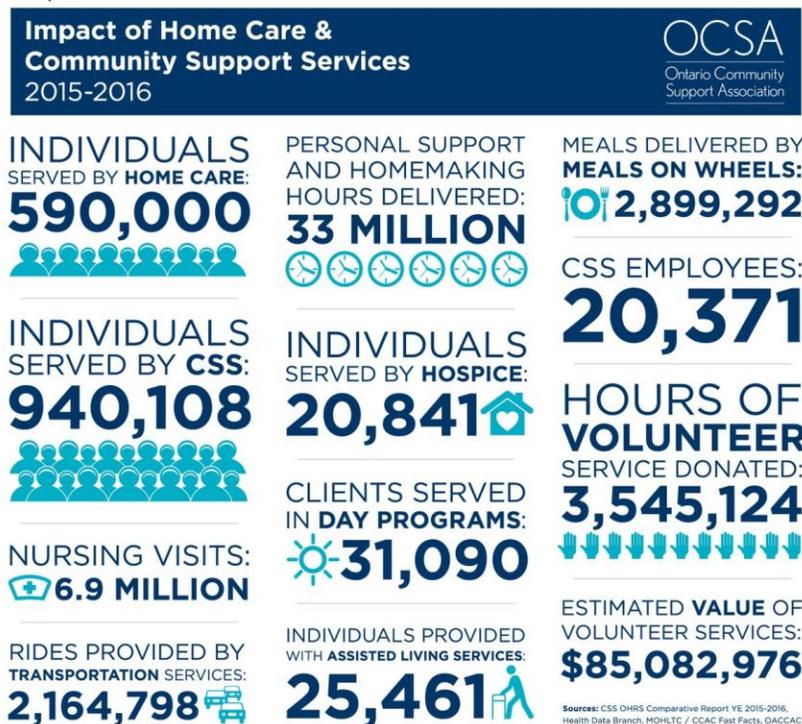
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Enabling Independence by Supporting Clients and Caregivers

Quick Facts: Community Support Services

- Community support services allow people to safely meet their unique needs, be more independent and resilient, and live the way they want to live, for longer.
- Appropriate services delay or prevent admissions into long-term care, reduce ED visits and ALC rates, and shorten hospital stays.
- Community support services encompass health promotion, preventative services and re-enablement services. They don't stop at meeting a client's current needs; they also defend against decline and more serious needs in the future.
- Not-for-profit providers re-invest surplus funds into providing more and better care, ensuring vital funding stays in the community. They have deep roots in they understand the unique needs of their diverse populations and geographies.
- Across Ontario, providers leverage over 100,000 volunteers, who provide over 3 million hours of service each year.



About OCSA

Across the province each year, over one million people receive home care and community support services – and the need is growing. The Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA) champions a strong, sustainable home and community support sector for all Ontarians, representing approximately 270 not-for-profit organizations. A respected leader celebrating our 25th anniversary this year, OCSA represents our members and their clients to government and other stakeholders. OCSA also creates partnerships, facilitates knowledge sharing, and offers training, resources and benefits that enable our members to continue to provide vital services to seniors and people with disabilities.

To learn more visit www.ocsa.on.ca.