A photograph of a caregiver in a blue uniform assisting an elderly person with a walker. The caregiver is holding the elderly person's arm, and the elderly person is wearing a pink shirt and light-colored pants. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

# **Better at home**

**Optimizing Home and Community Care for  
Better Client Outcomes and System  
Sustainability**

**Pre-Budget Recommendations  
Ontario Community Support Association  
January 2018**

## Where We Are Now

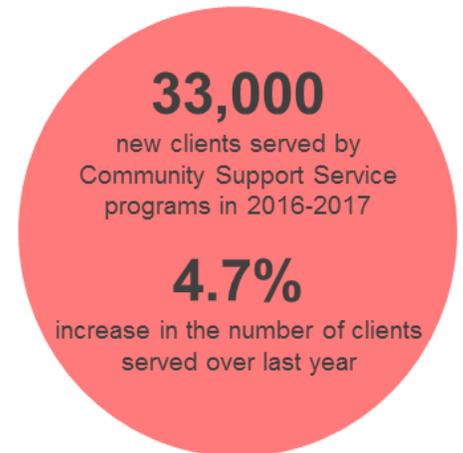
**Everyone deserves the chance to live independently in their own home or community for as long as possible.** For decades, Ontario's not-for-profit home and community support providers have been helping a full range of clients – including seniors and people with disabilities – to do just that. Services such as nursing, personal support services, Meals on Wheels, Alzheimer/adult day programs, transportation to medical appointments, caregiver support, and palliative care are an essential part of Ontario's health system, serving over a million Ontarians per year.

Recognizing the positive impact of home and community care services, the Ontario government has been actively increasing access to these services in order to shift care from the acute and long-term care sectors to the community. **While this strategy should lead to better outcomes, government funding has not kept up with growing demand, leading to gaps in care, overcrowded hospitals, and workforce shortages.**

Providers in the home and community care sector, with the majority of them being not-for-profit organizations, have been asked to do much more with less for many years. These organizations have successfully achieved improved efficiencies, but are now at the tipping point. **Without sufficient and strategic investments, the care that Ontarians prefer and rely on, and the overall sustainability of the health system, will be in jeopardy.**

It is time to shift our approach to funding home and community care, with an eye towards *both* expanding services, and building the capacity of organizations to meet ever-growing and changing needs in a more sustainable way, now and into the future.

To that end, **OCSA recommends the province invest \$359 million into the provision of care by frontline home and community organizations in 2018-2019** along three key investment principles: ensuring sufficient service volume and organizational capacity to meet client need, stabilizing and strengthening the home and community care workforce, and enabling innovation and evolution in the sector.



### Three Key Areas for Investment

- Ensuring sufficient service volume and organizational capacity to meet the growing needs of seniors and people with disabilities.
- Stabilizing and strengthening the home and community care workforce.
- Enabling innovation and evolution in home and community care.

# Summary of Recommendations

## *Meeting growing client need*

**\$76**  
million

1. The province increase operational funding for home and community care organizations by \$76 million, allowing them to invest in technology, improve staff retention, and undertake quality improvement initiatives.

**\$168**  
million

2. The province invest \$168 million in service expansion for home and community care to meet the growing needs of an aging population and help alleviate pressure points and shorten waiting lists in other parts of the health system.

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## *Stabilizing and strengthening the home and community care workforce*

**\$51.4**  
million

3. The government commit to fully funding service delivery cost increases under the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*.

**\$25**  
million

4. The government develop a comprehensive home and community care workforce strategy and commit \$125 million over five years to this strategy, starting with \$25 million in 2018-19.

**\$28.5**  
million

5. The province embed the existing PSW training funds into the budgets of home and community care providers and expand its value to \$28.5 million in order to serve all home and community care staff.

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## *Enabling innovation and evolution in home and community care*

**\$10**  
million

6. The province invest \$10 million in a one-time investment to boost information technology in the home and community care sector.



7. The government support and not compete with the current system of innovative home and community care providers to strengthen services for all clients.



8. The government ensures that community support services continue to be delivered by not-for-profit organizations.

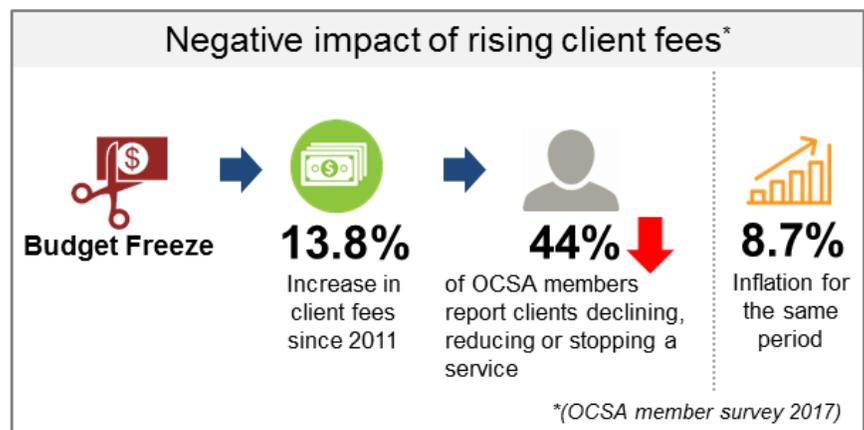
## Meeting Growing Client Need

**Recommendation 1: The province increase operational funding for home and community care organizations by \$76 million, allowing them to invest in technology, improve staff retention, and undertake quality improvement initiatives.**

In recent years, the bulk of investment in home and community care has gone into service volume expansion – though it still hasn't been enough to keep up with demand across the province. However, these investments channeled directly into new service hours were not accompanied by an increase in base operational funding to service providers.

Many home and community care agencies are into their seventh consecutive year with no increase to base operational funding. Only five of Ontario's 14 LHINs have recognized this important challenge and allocated a base increase within the past three years. With funding falling well behind the rate of inflation and other increases to the cost of delivering care, many agencies are reaching a breaking point.

This base budget “freeze” has forced agencies to make difficult decisions, and many have had no choice but to reduce services, create waitlists, or increase client fees to compensate for insufficient government funding. Not only does this put client health and safety at risk, but also drives up costs to the health system over time because clients may experience a more serious or rapid decline without access to home and community support.



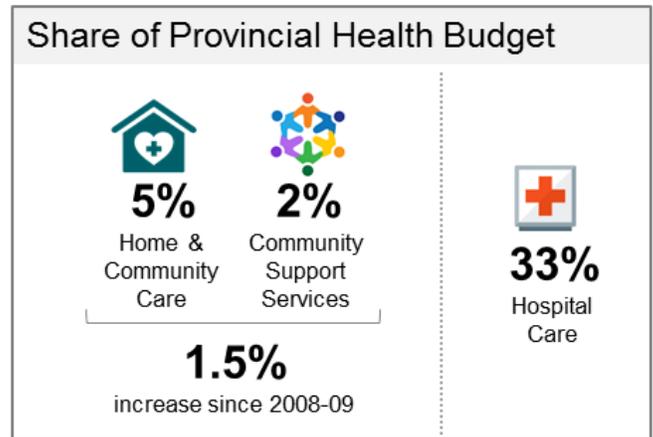
The sector, while grappling with staff shortages, is finding it challenging to attract and retain the talent required to continue providing high quality care, as it is at a significant disadvantage in terms of compensation, when compared with other health sectors.

Over the past 6 years, OCSA home and community care agencies have refined their operations to make the most of limited government funding. **In our 2018 member budget survey, OCSA members reported an average reduction of 12.7% in administrative costs since 2011. This represents a potential \$30.8 million in additional funding that may have been redirected towards frontline services.** For many agencies however, there are no more efficiencies to be found without cutting service availability or jeopardizing quality of care. After many years of frozen base budgets, OCSA requests \$76 million in operational funding increases to home and community care agencies. This is equivalent to approximately 2% of existing operational funding, and is vital if we are to maintain and expand levels of service, and keep up with the changing face of health care.

**Recommendation 2: The province invest \$168 million in service expansion for home and community care to meet the growing needs of an aging population, help alleviate pressure points and shorten waiting lists in other parts of the health system.**

Ontario’s clients and caregivers deserve to receive the right amount of care to meet their needs, regardless of their postal code or care setting.

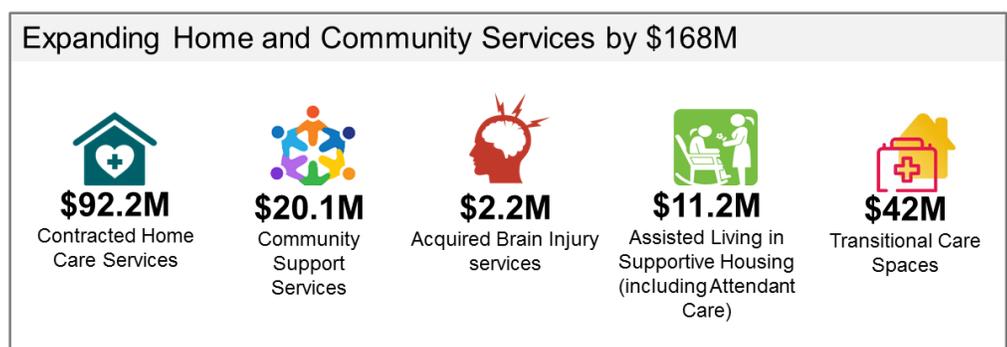
In 2017-2018, the home and community care sector represents approximately 7% of health care spending in the province. With Ontario’s seniors’ population expected to double from 2.2 million (16% of population) in 2015 to over 4.5 million (25% of the population) by 2041, demand for home care and community support services will only continue to grow.



A recent capacity study by the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network estimates that the demand for personal support services will grow by 3.3% annually between 2016-17 and 2021-22.<sup>1</sup> Two other capacity studies conducted in the Mississauga Halton and Central West LHINs outlined that even with a 50% expansion in long-term care capacity, there will be need for investments of 5.8% and 7.2% annually over 5 years to meet the growing demands in their regions.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past five years, the government has increased funding to the home and community sector. However the lion’s share of the investment (54%) has been directed to the former Community Care Access Centres, now part of the LHIN budget. Though these investments have supported general program expansion, they haven’t been allocated in the right proportions. Programs such as attendant care services for people with physical disabilities have not received similar increases in funding and clients are facing increasing waitlists.

To meet the rising demand indicated by this data, OCSA recommends a minimum increase of 3.3% to existing service volumes for all home and community services. This would result in a minimum investment of \$92



million for contracted home care services, \$20.1 million for community support services, \$2.2 million for acquired brain injury services, and \$11.2 million for assisted living in supportive housing and attendant care services. OCSA further recommends that the government commit to a minimum annual increase of 3.3% to home and community care services until 2021-22.

<sup>1</sup> North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN. Personal Support Services Examining the Factors Affecting the Gap between Supply and Demand in North Simcoe Muskoka. October 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Mississauga Halton LHIN. Meeting Senior Care Needs Now and in the Future – Highlights and Key Findings. May 2015. Central West LHIN Meeting Senior Care Needs Now and in the Future – Highlights and Key Findings. May 2015.

In addition, it is well understood that synergies between different parts of the health system are vital to build a sustainable health system that delivers positive outcomes and experiences to patients and clients. By combining knowledge and experience, health system experts can collaborate to solve problems which create pressure points in the system.

One of the most significant of these pressure points is Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients – those who end up or remain in hospital longer than necessary because there is insufficient capacity in long-term or home care settings to serve them.

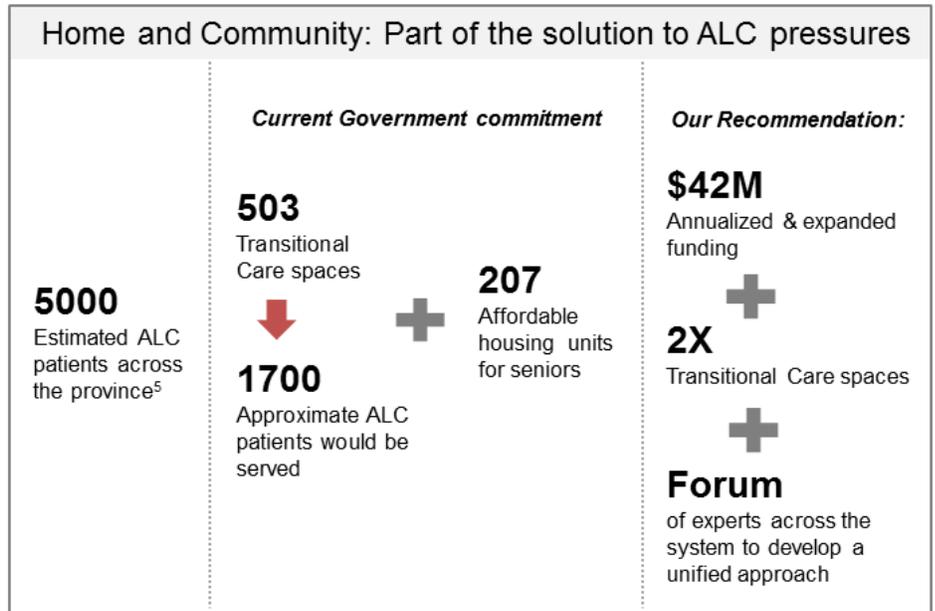
The net result is that clients are less likely to regain their independence the longer they remain in hospital, and the relatively expensive stay puts pressure on the health care

system. The result is overcrowded hospitals and ballooning health care budgets. It is estimated that there are approximately 5,000 ALC patients across the province.<sup>3</sup>

In October 2017, as part of an announcement to alleviate ALC pressures, the government announced the creation of 503 transitional care spaces to serve approximately 1,700 ALC patients, and 207 affordable housing units for seniors who need additional community supports when discharged from hospital.

OCSA supports this approach and recommends the continued utilization of home and community care as a key part of the solution to the province’s ALC pressures. Therefore, OCSA recommends that the province invest \$42 million to substantively expand transitional care spaces across the province. By annualizing the funding and doubling the number of transitional care spaces, long-term sustainable relief can be achieved.

In addition, we request that the province support the creation of a forum that convenes experts from across the health system – including acute, long-term care, home and community care and mental health sectors to develop a unified approach to reducing ALC rates across the province.



<sup>3</sup> [National Post, Ontario creating 1,200 new hospital beds across province to ease overcrowding](#) October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017.

## Stabilizing and strengthening the home and community care workforce

**Recommendation 3: The government commit to fully funding service delivery cost increases under the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*.**

OCSA strongly supports improving pay and working conditions for home and community support service workers. We believe that improved employee health, security, and satisfaction leads to a higher quality of care for clients.

The current government has demonstrated its commitment to improving working conditions across the province through the recently passed *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*. OCSA is supportive of most aspects of the new legislation, which has enormous potential to benefit the home and community care workforce, and in turn, the clients.

A recent report commissioned by OCSA and Home Care Ontario, and produced by KPMG, estimates that the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act* will increase costs for home and community care agencies by \$85 million annually, with \$51.4 million in costs for the provisions coming into effect in 2018-2019.

OCSA asks that the government commit to fully funding these costs in order to avoid the anticipated negative impact on client care.

**Recommendation 4: The government develop a comprehensive home and community care workforce strategy and commit \$125 million over five years to this strategy, starting with \$25 million in 2018-19.**

The home and community care sector is currently experiencing severe staffing challenges, including a shortage of personal support workers (PSWs). Although the province has announced a number of individual PSW-related projects recently, a challenge of this magnitude requires a unified, long-term strategy. Investments are also needed to bolster the existing working conditions while ensuring that the sector remains attractive when compared to other parts of the health system. The North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN estimates “home care demand growth rate is projected to be over 8 times the workforce growth rate over the next 5 years. PSW home care demand growth is projected to be 9 times the workforce growth rate.”<sup>4</sup>

Health human resources challenges facing home and community care are not limited to PSWs. Organizations find themselves at a significant compensation disadvantage when compared to the acute and long-term care sectors due to historical funding challenges. This includes salaries, benefits and pensions. While a vast majority of the sector provides some form of retirement benefit (89%) only a small proportion (11%) provides a defined benefit plan such as HOOPP, the standard across much of the health system.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN. Personal Support Services Examining the Factors Affecting the Gap between Supply and Demand in North Simcoe Muskoka. October 2017.

<sup>5</sup> OCSA, Wage and Benefits Report – Survey Results, Final Report, October 2017

While needed, past changes to PSW compensation have created wage compression across the sector. Wage gains have not been equal across the sector, and data collected by OCSA's Wage and Benefit Surveys in 2010 and 2017 show that certain positions such as Program Managers and Service Coordinators saw no real gains after inflation during this period. The recent increase to the minimum wage, supported and welcomed by OCSA, will create further wage compression across the sector.

One of the other crucial insights from the survey is that one third of the current CEOs and Executive Directors are slated for retirement in the next five years. With no clear career or educational pathway to the CEO/ED position, this presents a real risk to the leadership of the sector.

In line with the government's focus on increasing decent work and reducing precarious employment with the *Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs Act*, and to tackle this emerging health care crisis, OCSA recommends the creation of a \$125 million home and community care workforce stabilization and strengthening strategy.

### **Workforce stabilization and strengthening strategy**

- Succession planning for leaders.
- Focus on PSWs – recruitment, training and compensation.
- Address current limitations of homecare funding model and look for system wide solutions.
- Ensure sufficient health human resources capacity to meet growing demand.

**Recommendation 5: The province embed the existing PSW training funds into the budgets of home and community care providers and expand its value to \$28.5 million in order to serve all home and community care staff.**

PSWs and other frontline staff provide increasingly complex care in a unique environment in a client's home without onsite support of colleagues or other members of the health care team.

The current PSW Training Fund, established in 1998, has been providing funding to ensure PSWs have the right skillset needed to support the growing acuity of clients. This includes training in areas of high need such as dementia, palliative and end-of-life care, chronic illness care and mental health care. Funds are currently allocated through an application process.

To help meet the ever-growing training needs of all staff within the sector – OCSA recommends that the government dedicate and embed \$28.5 million for training into the operating budgets of home and community providers, the equivalent of 0.75% of base funding.

## Enabling innovation and evolution in home and community care

**Recommendation 6: The province invest \$10 million in a one-time investment to boost information technology in the home and community care sector.**

Extremely limited operational funding has curtailed the capacity of home and community support agencies to adopt technologies which would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of providing client care, and sharing information across other parts of the health system. Many report having to delay or cancel planned technological advancements due to funding shortfalls.

To enable and enhance organizations' ability to adopt these technologies, we recommend the creation of a one-time, \$10 million fund accessible to all home and community care providers.

We used a one-time grant to install a technology solution in our residential facility. Each resident wears a bracelet which is connected to a tablet in their room, and both of these items are connected to two staff mobiles on site. The resident can push a button on the bracelet when they require staff support. In addition, the system detects if a resident has a fall or has wandered from the building, sending an immediate alert to staff. Since installation, we've averted several emergency situations.

In addition, our residents can connect with family and friends anywhere in the world with a simple touch of a picture on the tablet screen. One resident reconnected with his niece in England, who he hadn't seen in 10 years. Another resident was able to reconnect with her mom who is no longer able to make the trip to visit with her due to medical challenges of her own. The excitement they experience after every call is contagious, and impacts not only an individual's happiness, but that of all the residents and staff.



Supportive Housing provider

**Recommendation 7: The government support and not compete with the current system of innovative home and community care providers to strengthen services for all clients.**

Home and community service providers have a proven track record of innovation in collaborative service delivery. Over the last ten years, the home and community care sector has worked with LHINs and other healthcare partners to develop new and innovative care models for the delivery of home and community care services.

In October of 2017, the province announced the creation of a new provincial organization to deliver personal support services to a small subset of home care clients. The goal of this new organization is to provide clients with better choice in regards to selecting their PSW and scheduling their care.

There are two major factors which limit the current system's ability to provide this kind of flexibility: a growing shortage of qualified PSWs in some parts of the province, and scheduling constraints that arise from client's needs. We believe that the new provincial organization will not be immune to these factors.

Therefore, collective efforts with service partners are needed if we are going to meet the growing needs of Ontarians seeking to remain at home and in their communities with the help of high quality health and social services.

OCSA is calling on the government not to compete, but to support and work collaboratively with existing home care providers to find meaningful and sustainable ways to improve choice and control for all home care clients, rather than a subset of clients.

**Recommendation 8: The government ensures that community support services continue to be delivered by not-for-profit organizations.**

Community support services, from assisted living to adult day programs, to hospice care, are currently provided by not-for-profits and charities from across the province. They receive partial government funding, which they supplement through fundraising, donations and client fees.

The delivery of these valuable services by not-for-profit organizations is the key to the sustainability of the health system. Unfortunately, the government is currently considering changes which would allow for-profit companies to receive government funding to provide these services.

Volunteers in the home and community sector donate over 3.5 million hours of service per year— an estimated value of \$85 million which would be lost in a for-profit model. This funding would be significantly eroded if more for-profit service delivery replaced existing organizations. Home and community organizations are embedded in the communities that they deliver services in – their community members volunteer on these Boards and work to support fundraising in their communities. Additionally, any surplus funds are currently reinvested in improving or increasing service delivery, rather than being directed to owner or shareholder profits.

Allowing private, for-profit companies to destabilize the community support services sector could affect the quality of care and drive up costs, therefore decreasing the availability of care.

It is thus essential that the not-for-profit model be protected.



## Conclusion

Whether we're speaking to Ontario's patients, caregivers or care providers, it is clear that the status quo is not going to be enough to meet the growing demand for health services. Though our health care system has made massive strides in recent years, and individual providers and health care workers are doing amazing and innovative work, we hear too many stories of vulnerable Ontarians unable to access sufficient care when and where they need it. OCSA knows that the home and community care sector can, and must do more to ensure Ontarians are able to live independently in health and happiness for as long as possible.

We believe that the province can ensure this happens by focusing on leveraging the tremendous value not-for-profit agencies bring to the health care system, and by investing in the frontline workers who are the backbone of home and community care.

Home and community care makes up about 7% of the total health care investment, **but we're able to punch above our weight because our services go beyond meeting a client's current needs – they also protect against decline and the need for more expensive care in future.** The recommendations above are smart, strategic and cost-effective investments with impacts that extend beyond each individual client, and will benefit the health system as a whole.

Now is a crucial time to make those investments, both to provide some relief to an overburdened system where service availability is in jeopardy, and to position it to meet future demand.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide inputs on the 2018 provincial budget, and for your continued support of home and community care.



**Deborah Simon**

CEO, Ontario Community Support Association  
104 – 970 Lawrence Ave. W.  
Toronto, ON  
416-256-3010 ext. 231

## 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) represents nearly 250 not-for-profit organizations that provide home care and community support services that help seniors and people with disabilities live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. These compassionate and cost-effective services improve quality of life and prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, emergency room visits and premature institutionalization. They are the key to a sustainable health care system for Ontario. For more information, visit [www.ocsa.on.ca](http://www.ocsa.on.ca).