

Aging with Dignity

The population is aging and the prevalence of chronic conditions and disabilities is on the rise.

- Ontario's seniors' population is expected to double in the next 15 years.
- Almost 80% of Ontarians over the age of 45 have a chronic condition, and of those, about 70% suffer from two or more chronic conditions.
- Persons with disabilities develop age-related diseases much earlier than the general population – at 50 years of age. They also have much higher incidents of chronic diseases.

Ontarians want to remain in their own homes and communities, not in hospitals or long term care facilities.

An Angus Reid Strategies poll for OCSA released today found:

- Six in ten Ontarians (62%) support giving funding for home and community support programs the same priority as funding for hospitals and long-term-care facilities and 21% believe home and community support services should be made a higher priority
- Six in ten Ontarians (59%) also agree with directing new funding designated for long-term-care to preventative home and community care services rather than bricks and mortar institution.

The Health Care in Canada Survey 2007 found Canadians would like:

- More home and community care programs: 78% (45% strongly)
- More funded wellness promotion and disease prevention education and intervention: 72% (42% strongly)
- Increasing investments to help patients manage their chronic illness: 72% (35% strongly)

By investing in home and community care, the province is investing in preventative health care, and can free up hospital beds, unclog emergency waiting rooms and reduce long-term care home waitlists the process.

Consider that many of those now on waiting lists for long-term-care homes do not need daily medical care. They just need help with things like bathing, household tasks or transportation to medical appointments. And they're not getting that help as they should.

What can you do? Commit to the following:

- Comprehensive, affordable home and community care services must be available to all Ontarians regardless of where they live.
- Rebalanced healthcare funding so that it better reflects the significant contribution home and community care does and could make to our health system.
- Expanded research and public education efforts on the essential role of home and community care and how it benefits the public health care system.
- Health care planning focused on individual and family needs.
- Specific plans to address health human resource challenges in home and community care.

March of Dimes Canada is a member of the Ontario Community Support Association, which offers more information at the following website: www.agingwithdignity.ca. The objective of this initiative is to educate, raise awareness, secure candidate commitments and engage Ontarians in a meaningful dialogue about the future of health care and the place of home and community support within it.