

Can you think of any reason not to invest in home and community care? We can't, so we asked candidates and parties about their plans to invest. Then we reviewed their platforms. <https://carewatchontario.com/provincial-election-2022/parties-speak/> Here are some highlights of what we have learned from each party.

**The Green Party platform (*The Green Plan. New solutions to old problems*)** takes a holistic approach to housing, climate, nature, health, education, and the economy. <https://files.ontariogreens.ca/platform/qpo-platform-2022-en-web.pdf>. The Greens say they will improve home care services by:

- Increasing funding by 20%, investing \$1.6B, and creating a standard province-wide basket of services
- Increasing high quality home care options for people with frailty, dementia, and disability

They also propose to:

- Promote co-housing, create incentives for retrofitting, and mandate universal design in all new housing
- Support community centres and neighbourhood coalitions and add more mobile polls
- Make broadband internet essential and roll out high-speed access across the province

**Our thoughts:** The Green Party's initiatives are those we advocate, but lack some important details, such as costs and timelines. In line with the party's central issues, the Greens provide more details in their plans for mental health and the climate economy. We would look forward to more specifics about home and community care.

**The Liberal Party platform (*A Place to Grow*)** proposes to "revolutionize senior care," to guarantee home care for anyone who needs it, and to "empower seniors to live independently." <https://ontarioliberal.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Our-Liberal-Plan-for-Ontario.pdf>

The Liberals commit to "rebalancing ... investments in senior care" and to changing the approach to the care of older adults by "putting home care first." Specifically, they propose to:

- Add more than \$2B by 2026 by annual 10% increases (prioritizing front-line non-profit care), guarantee that 400,000 more older Ontarians will get home care by 2026, and create a dementia care network
- Expand and make permanent the Seniors Home Safety Tax Credit and cover more costs
- Create 30,000 new community care spaces by 2028 and build 15,000 assisted living homes

**Our thoughts:** A "home care first" approach would represent a significant system change - one we have long advocated - and an annual 10% funding increase would sustain services and support expansion. However, we are disappointed that the Liberals haven't addressed the lack of province-wide home and community care standards, ways to know how services are performing, and ways to hold providers accountable.

**The New Democratic Party (NDP) platform (*Strong. Ready. Working for You.*)** views services in homes and communities and those in long-term care homes as part of a larger system. It also acknowledges that most Ontarians would prefer to stay in their homes.

[https://www.ontariondp.ca/sites/default/files/ondp\\_platform\\_booklet\\_bilingual\\_final\\_26apr\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.ontariondp.ca/sites/default/files/ondp_platform_booklet_bilingual_final_26apr_compressed.pdf)

The NDP commits to making it possible for people to, "...live at home longer as they age, with reliable and expanded services to support their needs." Key initiatives include:

- Provincial standards for a province-wide basket of core home and community care services
- Aligning services and workers to communities' needs, languages, foods, and practices
- A caregiver benefit program for unpaid caregivers
- Making the home and community care and long-term care system public and not-for profit

**Our thoughts:** These initiatives are in line with what Care Watch advocates. However, the NDP hasn't told us how and when it would make them happen and what they would cost. Plans for generating revenue are general, and we don't know how much could be generated and how it would be used and distributed.

The **Progressive Conservative Party** did not release an official platform. We have therefore reviewed the April 2022 budget (*Ontario's Plan to Build*) <https://budget.ontario.ca/2022/index.html> to identify priorities and proposed investments. The budget, which emphasizes building infrastructure projects for economic recovery, says that home and community care "... plays an important role in the lives of more than 700,000 families annually" and in "enabling older adults to live independently in the community." Investments include:

- Up to an additional \$1B over the next three years to expand services, support home care providers, address rising costs, and support recruitment and training; nearly \$100 million in additional funding over the next three years to expand community care programs such as adult day programs, meal services, transportation, assisted living services, and caregiver supports; an additional \$5.5 million in 2022–23 to extend the Ontario Community Support Program, which delivers meals, medicine, and other essential items; an additional \$5 million a year for three years for people with dementia and their caregivers, which would support an additional 6,500 people each year; and nearly \$4B beginning in 2019–20 for high-speed internet access across Ontario by the end of 2025

Additional initiatives include:

- Temporary Ontario Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit (previously introduced) and a proposed new, refundable Ontario Seniors Care at Home Tax Credit for eligible home care medical expenses
- Providing more virtual care options
- Expanding Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care across Ontario

**Our thoughts:** When a governing party tells us its intentions, it's hard to know which numbers include others, which were already announced, and which are new investments. In addition, some investments are "proposed." This budget hasn't been passed by the Legislature, and the Conservatives have not committed to reintroduce it if they are re-elected, but it does give some detail, which our comments reflect.

We don't know how this funding of "up to an additional \$1 billion" will be distributed, who will control it, who will receive it, what it includes (for example, expanding services for dementia, which we would support), and what other programs or initiatives might be sacrificed in the new mix.

The Home Safety Tax Credit is temporary (and not new), and the Ontario Seniors Care at Home Tax Credit is "proposed." In addition, tax credits help people who have already paid for equipment or renovations. Many older Ontarians can't afford the initial expense.

Virtual care can be a valuable option as long as it remains only one option. Some communities don't have adequate internet, and some older adults can't afford or don't feel comfortable using computers and internet.

We support the community paramedic program, but note that it seems primarily for older adults who are waiting for admission to long-term care homes rather than those who intend to remain in their homes.

**Our conclusions:** We are heartened that all parties plan to invest in home and community care, but can't be dazzled by numbers. How will the money be invested, who will decide where it goes, and who benefits? We've added some thoughts and questions. You may have others of your own. Ask them when you can.

Now it's up to you.

**Ask, think, and then vote!**

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