

## Ontario Election 2022: The Next Chapter

July 22, 2022



Ontario elected its provincial government on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Each party promised to invest in home and community services and the people who deliver those services. You can find their platforms and our thoughts about them at

<https://carewatchontario.com/provincial-election-2022/parties-speak/>

Now comes the hard part. The election was the end of one chapter in the story. It's the next chapter that counts.

The party that will be governing Ontario – the **Progressive Conservatives** – released its promises in the form of a draft budget (**Ontario's Plan to Build**) <https://budget.ontario.ca/2022/index.html>. This budget hasn't yet been tabled or passed by the Legislature, so we don't know exactly what the final one will look like, but proposed initiatives and investments would include:

- Up to an additional \$1B to expand services, support home care providers, address rising costs, and support recruitment and training
- Funding to deliver essential items and support people with dementia and their caregivers
- Tax credits for upgrading homes of older adults and for eligible home care medical expenses
- Increasing the minimum wage and making the temporary personal support workers' raises permanent
- Adding more than 13,000 workers, including 8,000 personal support workers
- Skills training, retraining, and upgrading; encouragement for students and newcomers to work in underserved communities; and reduction of barriers for foreign-credentialed health workers

Even if this budget is passed, however, it still leaves us with questions. For example:

- What does funding of "up to an additional \$1B" cover? Does it include the other amounts named? How much is new? How much has already been spent? What other programs might be cut?
- How will the funding be distributed, who will control it, and who will receive it?
- If money flows through the new Ontario Health Teams, will there be enough for home and community services? Ontario Health – the new superagency – talks about population health. Will this part of the population – older adults who want to remain in their homes and communities – have what they need?
- Will funding and incentives for health workers include personal support workers in home and community services? Will they be paid as much as those in hospitals and long-term care homes?
- How will unpaid caregivers be supported?

The media increasingly report that home care providers don't give personal support workers enough time to complete their assigned tasks for clients and also that close to 60% of client visits are missed. So another important question is:

- How will providers be held accountable for the funding they receive to deliver services?

The other parties also made promises. All of them recognized the value of home and community services.

- **The Green Party** promised to improve home care services by increasing funding by 20%, investing \$1.6B, creating a standard province-wide basket of services, and providing more high quality home care options.
- **The Liberal Party** would add more than \$2B to home care (prioritizing front-line non-profit care), guarantee that 400,000 more older Ontarians would get home care, establish a dementia care network, create 30,000 new community care spaces, and build 15,000 assisted living homes.

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- **New Democratic Party (NDP)** initiatives included provincial standards for a province-wide basket of core home and community care services; making home and community care and long-term care public and not-for profit; and aligning services and workers to communities' needs, languages, foods, and practices.

To strengthen the workforce and improve working conditions:

- **The Greens** would increase the minimum wage, with top-ups for higher cost cities; provide 10 paid sick days; and give all workers employment rights and benefits. To recruit and keep workers, they would fast-track approvals for 15,000 international health care workers, including personal support workers. They would pay personal support workers at least \$25/hour, pay them for travel time between visits, offer "fair benefits," and give them and other health care workers equal pay for the same responsibilities. They would also block legislation limiting wages and bargaining rights. Finally, they would pilot a support program for unpaid caregivers.
- **The Liberals** would hire 10,000 workers and remove roadblocks to internationally-trained professionals. They would repeal legislation limiting wages and bargaining rights; raise the minimum wage, with a living wage to match living costs; give all workers 10 sick days and benefits; and forgive student loans for personal support workers and other COVID-19 health care workers. Personal support workers would earn \$25/hour, with fair and consistent pay across home and community care, long-term care, and hospitals. For unpaid caregivers, the Caregiver Tax Credit would be enhanced.
- **The NDP** would raise the minimum wage; give all workers 10 permanent emergency leave days and high quality benefits; strengthen employment law; remove barriers to unionization; repeal Bill 124; and engage in good faith bargaining with the public sector. They would hire 10,000 personal support workers, raise personal support workers' wages at least \$5 above pre-pandemic levels, end further cuts to health care workers, and recognize foreign-educated workers' qualifications. There would also be a benefit program for unpaid caregivers.

*All parties express a commitment to home and community services and to the people who provide those services.*

*This is good news, but only if it actually happens.*

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**During the campaign, Care Watch encouraged you to ask questions. Don't stop now.** Whether your provincial representative is part of the governing party or another party, they can advocate for home and community services for older Ontarians.

### **To find your riding and your MPP:**

- Enter your postal code on the Elections Ontario website to find your electoral district: <https://www.elections.on.ca/en/voting-in-ontario/electoral-districts.html>. The link will tell you the name of your Member of Provincial Parliament.
- Then go to the Legislative Assembly website and look up your MPP's name to find their contact information: <https://www.ola.org/en/members/current/contact-information>

### **Then you can ask:**

- What will you do to give all older Ontarians the services they need to remain in their homes and communities safely and productively?
- What will you do to give personal support workers in home and community services the same pay and benefits as those who work in hospitals and long-term care homes?
- What will you do to support unpaid caregivers?
- What will you do to hold providers accountable for providing contracted and high quality services?

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