



The calendar tells us it's spring, and the outside is catching up. It's a good time for Care Watch to look at what we have been doing so far in 2024, look ahead at what we see coming, and note what we're watching out for.

We continue to advocate for the policies, programs, and funding that will help keep older Ontarians in their homes. Whenever possible, we communicate directly to decision makers about them. Our 2024 pre-budget submission concentrated on increasing investment in home

and community services, closing the wage gap between personal support workers in the community and those in hospitals and long-term care homes, and investing in models of cluster care designed to bring services directly to settings with high concentrations of older adults. You can find the submission at

<https://carewatchontario.com/home-community-care/submissions/2024-pre-budget-submission/>.

After our submission, we eagerly awaited the provincial budget. As we expected, the budget begins with glowing statements about manufacturing and infrastructure. These remain the primary emphases, though some of this investment is for health services, with funding included for hospital and community infrastructure.

The budget says very little about older adults (we can expect some messages from government in June, which is traditionally Seniors Month). We are pleased at the announcement that government is investing "an additional \$2 billion in the home and community care sector to support expansion and increase compensation for frontline workers." This is certainly welcome news, but we need to know more. The Ontario Office of Financial Accountability hasn't yet released the third and fourth quarter reports, so we don't know how much of the previous home and community care budget was actually spent and how it was used. We have even less idea of what will happen to the funding announced in the 2024 budget, which gives only broad figures. It's hard to know what is new funding and what may have been previously announced. It's equally hard to know who will control and distribute it, where it will go, what services it will pay for, and who will receive those services.

*How will Ontario invest in personal support workers? Will those working in the community be paid as much as those working in other settings?*

*How much funding will go to for-profit service providers?*

Government talks about increasing compensation for frontline workers, but doesn't specify which ones. Are personal support workers included? Will those who work in the community finally receive the same wages and benefits as those who work in hospitals and long-term care homes? This is the only way we can recognize their importance and encourage them not to leave home and community care or personal support work altogether.

Another concern is how much of the home and community care funding will go to the profit-making corporations that have been increasingly taking over home and community services. The profit motive is fundamentally incompatible with care, and we are already seeing disastrous results for clients, workers, and communities. You can read our past and current work on privatization and profit at

<https://carewatchontario.com/home-community-care/services/>. As the tension between care and profit grows even more acute, we will be building on this work.

Despite the various investments and initiatives in home and community care, the larger picture is still unclear. Ontario's most recent strategy for older adults was released in November 2017. In 2019, government held consultations to prepare for updating it, but no new strategy has appeared. Given the growing number of older adults in the population and the new structures and policies throughout the system, an overall strategy would provide a much-needed framework and prevent a piecemeal and fragmented approach.

We are also looking to the broader environment. Until very recently, Canada was the only country with universal health insurance but without universal drug coverage. We now see the beginnings of change. The federal pharmacare program is still in the pilot stage. It covers only a very limited range of drugs, and negotiations with the provinces and territories are in progress. As the program expands throughout Canada, we will be able to use collective purchasing power to reduce costs to individuals and to the government. The path won't be straightforward or without obstacles, but at least the first step has been taken.

*Research partnerships add to our understanding and make our voices heard.*

*Social media platforms promote communication.*

As needs become more intense, we look for more ways to connect with others. Our research involvement has expanded. We are now a partner on three research projects designed to yield information that will improve environments, services, and living conditions for older adults. You can see more about these projects at <https://carewatchontario.com/about-us/partnerships/>.

We are expanding our reach in other ways. We have renewed and reorganized our website (<https://carewatchontario.com/>) to make it easier to find information. We have also launched or relaunched several social media platforms. We encourage you to visit us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#) (previously Twitter). You can also find us through [Linktree](#).

On these platforms, you can let us know what you are thinking and what you would like us to work on. You can also use them to let others know about us. The larger our collective reach, the stronger our advocacy for what older Ontarians need and want.

#### **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

***We've talked about ourselves. Now we'd like to hear from you.***

- ***Check out our website*** <https://carewatchontario.com>. Let us know what you think and what you'd like to know more about.
- ***Take a look at our social media platforms.*** If you have comments or questions, let us know.
- ***Tell us what is important to you.*** It informs and strengthens our advocacy when we know what matters to you.

We are an independent, non-partisan, not-for profit organization. We welcome and appreciate donations to support our advocacy work. However, we are not a registered charity, so we can't issue tax receipts for donations.

To donate, please go to: <https://carewatchontario.com/get-involved/#donate>.

• *Not-for-Profit.* • *Volunteer-Run.* • *Senior-Led.*

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