

Response – Ontario Liberal Party

Age-Friendly Communities:

Q: How will you work with Ontario municipalities to ensure communities are developed and evolve with an age-friendly focus?

A: Announced in *Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors*, our government committed an additional \$7 million over three years to our Age-Friendly community grant program that will help communities across Ontario implement their age-friendly initiatives.

This is in addition to the past investment of \$1.5 million over two years (2015-17) to support 56 projects with local municipalities and organizations to help plan for more accessible and inclusive communities as part of the Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant Program. This program encouraged municipalities across Ontario to apply an age-friendly lens to all areas of local planning.

Further to these investments, our government released the Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide in 2013 as one of a number of innovative initiatives to foster and promote age-friendly communities across the province.

Our Age-Friendly Community program's funding also serves builds awareness and momentum across the province, so that all communities continue embracing age-friendly planning as a key element of local planning, and to raise the standards municipalities and organizations have in place for their seniors population.

Q: How will you cooperate with other countries, provinces and municipalities who are leading the development of age-friendly communities and bring their successes to Ontario?

A: On March 26th, our government presented the first-ever Ontario Age-Friendly Community Recognition awards to celebrate communities and municipalities that are leading the province with its age-friendly policies, programs and services.

Qualifying communities will also become eligible for pan-Canadian recognition and international endorsement through the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

This government has been committed to increasing the awareness of age-friendly planning principles, to share best practices and to help support communities and municipalities improve on their age-friendly community action plans.

Health Care:

Q: What will your party do to address the shortage in long-term care beds and to ensure stressed long-term care facilities and staff have the resources and training needed to provide dignified, safe care in a timely manner?

We know the need is there for more long-term care beds for those who can no longer live independently and require more care, and we recognize that this can be a challenging time for families. That is our government has announced the allocation of 5,000 new long-term care beds across the province that will be open by 2022, and have committed to creating more than 30,000 new

beds over the next decade, while continuing to renovate and rebuild all old long-term care homes by 2025.

Since fall 2017, we've been consulting widely with the public and stakeholders on this strategy and invited providers to apply for new beds. We're prioritizing new beds that serve specific cultural needs – 1,500 of the new 5,000 beds will be culturally appropriate, including those serving francophone and Indigenous populations.

We know that healthcare professionals are the backbone of our healthcare system and we know they need the appropriate resources to care for our loved ones. As health care advancements continue, our population is living longer and developing care needs that are becoming increasingly complex. That is why as part of our 2018 Budget, we're investing \$300 million over three years to increase staffing in long-term care homes as part of our government's goal to increase the provincial average to four hours of daily care per resident by 2020. Starting in 2018-19 that will include a \$50 million investment to hire an additional Registered Nurse in every long-term care home in the province.

This is part of our commitment to increasing the hours of care each resident receives to an average of 4 hours per day by 2020, and will ensure that every home in the province has staff with specialized training in behavioural supports for residents with cognitive impairments. This means an additional 15 million hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care for our loved ones living in long-term care. We're also providing \$38 million for training and education for new and existing PSWs to ensure they have the tools they require to support our loved ones.

Q: How will your party improve timely access to comprehensive primary, home and community care and support people to stay healthy at home for as long as possible?

We have heard from the people of Ontario that they want to be cared for close to home, so we know how critical home and community care is for seniors and people of all ages who require additional support to stay in their homes—where they want to be.

Over the past 10 years, the total number of home and community care clients has increased by almost 20%, and we have more than doubled our funding for home and community care since 2003. We know with a growing and aging population that there is more that we can do.

That is why in our 2018 Budget we are investing \$650 million in home care over the next three years, \$230 million for this year alone. This will fund an estimated:

- 2.8M more hours of personal support, or the equivalent of over 1400 full-time positions
- 284,000 more nursing visits (the equivalent of 146 nursing positions)
- 58,000 more therapy visits
- improved digital information and communication tools to enhance coordination, scheduling and connections among clients, families and caregivers,
- and improved working conditions and contract rates for PSWs, registered practical nurses, registered nurses and therapists.

Ongoing home care funding of more than \$3 billion per year now provides about 670,000 clients and their families with more access to home and community health care services. We will continue to make these important investments so that people can continue to receive the care they need closer to home.

Currently approximately 94% of people in Ontario have access to a primary care physician. We know this is not necessarily the case in all parts of the province so we have been creating new and expanded interprofessional primary care programs and services to respond to the needs of communities across the province.

There are currently 294 interprofessional primary care teams across the province. Over the course of this mandate, our government has invested in 19 new or expanded family health teams, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics and community health centres that will recruit nearly 100 new health professionals. We're continuing to make investments to ensure that everyone in the province has access to primary care.

Q: How will your party support and promote the mental health of older adults?

We know that one in three people in Ontario will experience a mental health challenge in their lifetime, and we know how critical it is that everyone in the province can access support where and when they need it.

That is why our government is making an unprecedented investment in mental health and addictions that will improve care for those who experience mental health or addictions challenges in their lifetime.

We announced the largest investment in Canadian history in mental health and addictions services –a four-year investment of \$2.1 billion that will reframe the system to deliver more accessible and better integrated care for people at all stages of life, including older adults.

Up to 350,000 more people with mild to moderate anxiety or depression across the province will have access to publicly funded structured psychotherapy in settings closer to home in settings like their doctor's offices or a community organization. We'll also create 2,475 more supportive housing units over four years for those who require care in safe, affordable and appropriate housing.

We're also making a \$10.0M additional investment in Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO)--bringing total annual provincial investment to \$74.0M--to enhance behavioural supports of residents living in long-term care with dementia/Alzheimer's disease.

These historic investments will help reduce wait lists and make it easier for people to access the care they need, when they need it.

Q: How is your party supporting and encouraging mandated geriatric training for all health care professionals, and what funding and other measures will your party commit?

We know how critical it is to increase access to geriatric care. We have been working to support the growth of physician house calls, and as part of *Aging with Confidence, Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors*, we committed to strengthening the healthcare workforce's ability to provide specialized care in geriatrics by increasing training opportunities for healthcare providers.

Recently our government announced that we're helping to meet the demand for physicians in communities across the province by funding more residency positions for medical school graduates who have completed their undergraduate training at an Ontario medical school.

As part of this commitment, we're working with medical schools to create more specialized residency spots this upcoming school year. One of the priority specialties for candidates to enter is Geriatric Medicine as a

subspecialty of Internal Medicine. This investment will help to ensure a critical supply of Geriatric specialists will be entering the workforce now and into the future.

Q: What will your party do to ensure seniors have access to a coordinated network of supports, including homecare?

Our 2018 Budget included an investment of an additional \$650 million over the next three years to improve home and community care services and deliver more consistent care around the province.

This investment will enable better coordination, scheduling and connections among clients, families and caregivers, with a \$5 million investment in improved digital information and communication tools to support family and patient care.

We also introduced a new framework for home-care assessments and planning based on the level of care needed by an individual, to improve consistency and transparency of available services. The framework will give clients and caregivers more predictability about how much home care they have access to. We've also committed \$34.5 million over three years to expand community dementia programs to support patients and their caregivers.

We're investing \$102 million over three years to support the expansion of interprofessional care teams to help people with their specific health care goals and needs. They deliver primary care ranging from chronic disease management and addressing complex health needs, to helping deal with life challenges that negatively impact their health. This investment will result in 19 new or expanded teams that will recruit nearly 100 new health professionals such as nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, social workers, psychologists, chiropractors, physiotherapists and pharmacists to provide direct primary care services to patients who can benefit most from team-based primary care.

Q: Caregiving can be a rewarding experience but can also involve financial hardship, stress and mental health challenges. How will your party support unpaid caregivers who play a vital role in Ontario's health care system?

Caregivers represent nearly 30 per cent of Ontarians and contribute more than 70 per cent of their family's and/or friends' caregiving needs. We know how important this role is, and we know that they need support as well. That is why our 2018 Budget includes over 2.8 million more hours of personal support care available, with more caregiver respite, over 284,000 more nursing visits and 58,000 more therapy visits. Our Budget is also providing more non-medical supports to patients and caregivers in the community through an additional investment to providers of visiting hospice volunteer services;

Last year we committed more education and training programs for unpaid caregivers to help them learn how to provide care to their loved ones at home in ways that work for them, including online, in group settings and in a variety of languages. We also introduced a new Ontario Caregiver Tax Credit to streamline and extend support for people caring for infirm relatives.

We're also providing \$6.5 million in funding to establish the Ontario Caregiver Organization, a resource for caregivers that will make it easier for them to access a range of services and information.

The Ontario Caregiver Organization will improve the caregiving experience for Ontario's caregivers by providing a one-stop resource where they can go to seek supports and services. In planning and delivery, the organization will be guided by caregivers.

It will make it easier for caregivers to access a range of services and resources, including information on training, local services and collaboration opportunities. It will also have an advisory role on supports and research; and, will serve people helping individuals with a wide range of conditions, like chronic diseases; dementia; mental health and addictions; and, developmental disabilities.

Q: How will your party ensure Ontarians understand and report elder abuse? What will your party do to ensure seniors who are abused get support and assistance?

A: Our government has long been committed to improving the health and well-being of Ontario's seniors, and we are working hard to ensure that we create a safe and supportive environment for seniors across the province.

That is why we were the first province in Canada to introduce a strategy to combat elder abuse.

In November 2017, our government renewed its commitment to combating elder abuse by addressing ageism and social isolation, both key risk factors among seniors, through *Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors*.

Under our plan, we have allocated \$4.9 million over three years to increase elder abuse prevention and strengthen service providers and bystanders capacity to intervene when an older adult is at risk or is experiencing abuse.

Since its launch, our government has invested nearly \$17 million to advance the elder abuse strategy across three main areas, including the training of front line staff, raising awareness through public education and coordination of community resources.

These investments have included more than \$900,000 in annual funding to support Elder Abuse Ontario and its initiatives to strengthen prevention and community response.

Through our partnership with Elder Abuse Ontario, we have trained close to 30,000 front-line workers in a variety of sectors, including the health, justice, social services, education and volunteer sectors to ensure improved recognition and response to instances of elder abuse, reached more than 58,500 individuals through public education sessions delivered across the province, and provided support for approximately 50 local elder abuse networks in an effort to coordinate community response to elder abuse.

Retirement Income Security:

Q: What is your party's retirement income security plan for seniors now and future generations of seniors?

A: Retirement security is a top priority for our government, and we recognize that members and beneficiaries are concerned about their pensions.

That's why as part of our 2018 Budget, we are increasing the monthly Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund (PBGF) guarantee from \$1,000 to \$1,500.

The PBGF is the only one of its kind in Canada, which will now guarantee payment of \$1,500 a month if the employer becomes insolvent or goes bankrupt. Our government's action on the PBGF provides critical assistance to pensioners and plan members.

Our government has also proposed legislation to make the increase to the PBGF retroactive, allowing Sears pensioners to benefit.

However, both the PCs and NDP have voted against Bill 177, which included our increase to the PBGF.

Q: The rate of individuals covered by a defined-benefit pension continues to decline across the province and the country – even though, when properly managed, this pension option is the best way to ensure retirement income security. How will your party support defined-benefit pension plans?

A: Our government has introduced a number of changes which have increased support of defined-benefit pension plans in Ontario. This including changes to the funding framework for defined benefit pension plans that will require employers to make contributions if a plan falls below a certain level.

We are also increasing transparency by requiring plans to develop funding and governance policies. Lastly, our changes will ensure beneficiaries receive updated information on the status of their plan.