



ONTARIO HOMES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS ASSOCIATION

525 BRUCE AVENUE, WINDSOR, ON, N9A 4X1
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Pre-Budget Consultation Submission Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Ontario Homes for Special Needs Association

January 24th 2020

Amarjot Sandhu, MPP, Chair
Julia Douglas, Clerk
Room B-304, Whitney Block
Queen's Park, Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Submitted by Ontario Homes for Special Needs Association
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About Ontario Homes for Special Needs Association

Ontario Homes for Special Needs Association (OHSNA) is a voluntary, non-profit organization representing owners, operators and product/service suppliers involved in Community Homes for Opportunity (CHO) and Homes for Special Care (funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care) and Housing with Supports (funded by Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing). Prior to the establishment of the OHSNA, there was no one voice that could speak on behalf of the vulnerable population served by Community Homes for Opportunity (CHO), Housing with Supports and Homes for Special Care, nor for the operators of those facilities. In 2000, the two associations representing these sectors merged to provide one clear voice for residents and operators.

About Our Homes

Community Homes for Opportunity (CHO), Housing with Supports and Homes for Special Care provide permanent housing and living support to impoverished, frail adults with a wide range of special needs such as persons with mental and physical disabilities. In the absence of our support, our residents would likely be homeless and prone to even more serious health problems.

Over one hundred homes province-wide are members of OHSNA. These are homes that have chosen to belong and are committed to providing and maintaining adequate, safe and pleasant facilities, with professionally-trained staff who respect over 5000 residents, support their participation in rehabilitation programs, and recognize their accomplishments so they may achieve their potential and best quality of life.

Homes for Special Care (HSC) / Community Homes for Opportunity (CHO)

The Homes for Special Care Program was established in 1964 to provide long-term and permanent residential care to persons discharged from Provincial Psychiatric Hospitals who require supervision or assistance with activities of daily living. With the divestment of the PPHs, in 1998, more patients were located in the HSC homes. Like Housing with Supports program, the profile of residents was and remains today wide and varied. They are adults ranging from psychiatrically diagnosed, dually diagnoses and those with drug and alcohol use issues.

Homes for Special Care provide an important form of independent community living for a significant number of persons across Ontario. The program places a high value on resident self-determination and quality of living environment for residents.

After a pilot program in the London region, the HSC program will be replaced by the CHO Program across Ontario in the near future.



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Key Issue: Creating a sustainable funding model for Homes for Special Care and Community Homes for Opportunity

Our home operators provide 24-hour, quality and professional support to some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario, and very often provide personal care and support outside of their job description. As home operators are outside of the not-for-profit system, they incur costs that not-for-profit and community services do not, although per diems are often *less than half* than that of not-for-profit homes; Our home operators purchase homes, furniture, and incur all other costs associated with managing a home, and unlike not-for-profit homes, our operators are not able to access funding for these costs. As costs continue to rise, per diem funding levels have remained stagnant, resulting in some of our members seeing a net loss last year. The current per diem rates need urgent attention to be brought in line with actual running costs, acknowledging that home operators in the private sector are responsible for all operation costs. The private sector model, funded appropriately, will always be more economical than not-for-profit housing programs, and therefore, is the only model that is capable of providing housing program services 24/7, ensuring the safety, comfort and quality of life of our residents.

We understand that the Ontario government is in a period of fiscal restraint, however, we believe that we can address the inadequate funding by working with the Ministry to identify inefficiencies in placements. Several of our homes experience empty beds going unfilled for significant periods of time, while others have waitlists.

Our Recommendations:

- Align funding with 100% licensed beds, rather than the current 90% funding level.
- Bring per-diem levels in line with reasonable expenses and ensure equity between not-for profit and private sector homes.
- Provide an annual cost-of-living enhancement to CHO and HSC homes for a defined period to bring salaries up to an adequate level for staff retention.
- Update MOHLTC policy to ensure the greatest efficiency and appropriateness of placements.
- Restore the compensation that the homes previously received to address the minimum wage increase, that was awarded by the previous government.

Housing with Supports

In 2009, Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Ministry of Community and Social Services carried out a study by St. Michael's hospital that found that:



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- Most tenants in Ontario Housing with Supports were younger than 65.
- Most tenants face significant physical health problems and developmental disabilities and mental health issues were prevalent.
- Over 1/3 of tenants had a history of homelessness. The average tenant had lived in Housing with Supports for 5 years.
- Participation in community life and social/recreational activities outside the Housing is extremely limited and participation in the paid workforce is almost zero;
- Most tenants felt socially well-connected to family, friends and Housing staff, although ¼ of tenants have little contact with friends or family;
- Tenants perceive the quality of their housing to be quite good. Most express a preference to stay at their current residence.

Key Issue: Addressing the funding level of Housing with Supports

Most residents in Housing with Supports have mental illness diagnoses or are frail elderly people who require supervision in their daily life and activities. Our home operators provide 24-hour quality and professional support to some of Ontario's most vulnerable populations.

Currently, funding is flowed through the Regional Housing Offices and therefore the levels are determined at the regional level, which means that operators are being funded at different rates for providing the same services. All beds in the province should be funded at the same level to ensure equity in service delivery.

Similar to HSC and CHO homes, per diem rates overall are not in line with actual operating costs and require an increase to sustain the sector and continue providing 5000 long-term homes to vulnerable people.

Our Recommendations:

- Bring per-diem levels in line with reasonable expenses and ensure equity between not-for profit and private sector homes.
- Provide an annual cost of living enhancement to Housing With Supports for a defined period to bring salaries up to an adequate level for staff retention.
- Earmark regional funding for Housing With Supports to ensure the provincial funds intended to go towards Housing With Supports are in fact going to fund this program.
- Implement a compensation package to address the negative impact the minimum wage increase had on our homes' operational budgets.