

Roadmap Towards a Renewed Ontario Dementia Strategy

Expert Panel Analysis | **Executive Summary**
Submitted by the Alzheimer Society of Ontario



“Those with dementia are still people and they still have stories and they still have character and they’re all individuals and they’re all unique. And they just need to be interacted with on a human level.”

- Carey Mulligan

Executive Summary

We applaud steps the provincial government has taken in recent years to reduce silos within healthcare and focus care where it should be: around the patient. A patient's needs, and not those of the healthcare system, must guide every care decision made for Ontarians living with dementia.

The previous government committed \$100 million over three years for an Ontario Dementia Strategy in 2017. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at the time initiated a consultation process for developing this strategy, and the former government acknowledged that the costs for dementia care in Ontario would be nearly \$325 billion from 2008 to 2038.

Unfortunately, much of the former government's plan and promised investments did not come to fruition. A lack of key investments promised in 2017 created further gaps within dementia care. It is estimated that almost one million Canadians will live with dementia soon after 2030.

As baby boomers continue to age and retire, prevalence of dementia will continue to rise at an alarming rate.

Currently, over 260,000 Ontarians live with dementia. As Ontario's population ages, the number of people living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia is expected to double within a generation.

We respectfully call on the Government of Ontario to keep existing momentum by expanding funding and supports for people living with and those affected by dementia.

Building on Canada's first-ever national dementia strategy, unveiled in 2019, our panel of experts proposes this updated and achievable **Roadmap Towards a Renewed Ontario Dementia Strategy**.

Our expert panel's recommendations for a renewed Ontario Dementia Strategy encompass care for people living with dementia, including for their care partners, throughout the dementia journey. From early diagnosis to end of life, this strategy focuses on prolonging compassionate and familial care at home.

Dementia care is currently centred around institutional settings: hospitals and long-term care. **Through our achievable strategy, we propose a shift in focus which keeps older Ontarians living with dementia where they want to be — at home — for as long as possible.**

Proactive provision of services, following a standard care pathway for Ontarians living with dementia, will offer earlier detection, prolonged aging at home, increased dignity, compassion, and a cost-effective streamlining of service care.

Ontario's experts in dementia care recommend that the provincial government:



Draft and implement a renewed Ontario Dementia Strategy under the purview of a dedicated Secretariat, with the authority to oversee dementia care and make recommendations across the spectrum of government services, including health and long-term care.



Establish integrated community-based care encompassing community support services, day programs, respite care, home care, memory clinics, occupational therapy, and medical interventions to retain the quality of life of people living with dementia.



Complement the current plan of expanding long-term care homes and building of new long-term care beds by ensuring that the sector has sufficient health human resource capacity and well-trained staff to provide adequate care for older Ontarians, particularly dementia care and behavioural support.

There are forward-thinking options to bolster our educational infrastructure for healthcare professionals. This roadmap introduces risk reduction measures that can help delay onset and reduce severity of symptoms, prolonging an individual's ability to live with dignity at home.

These recommendations address bottlenecks in service provision that will be resolved through straightforward policy changes, as well as those requiring future investment.

Collectively, decision makers must shift perception to recognize and accept that support for care partners is an important component of an individual's dementia care journey. Encouraging aging in place, the panel

also considers what is required to reduce the strenuous emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial burden placed on care partners.

The objective of the **Roadmap for a Renewed Ontario Dementia Strategy** is to work collaboratively with government, industry, care providers, families, and people living with dementia to buffer the economic and emotional impact of dementia on Ontario's health and long-term care systems in the coming decades.

This executive summary focuses on key recommendations. A detailed list of recommendations and associated investments can be found in the extended strategy.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Draft and implement a renewed Ontario Dementia Strategy** under the purview of a dedicated Secretariat, with the authority to oversee dementia care and make recommendations across the spectrum of government services, including health and long-term care.
- 2. Create mandatory professional development for physicians** regarding neurology, dementia diagnosis, and emotion-focused care, bundled as comprehensive components of education, training, and professional development for physicians in Ontario.
- 3. Establish a clear Dementia Pathway** for use by healthcare professionals including a presumptive diagnosis, assessment of suitable pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions, support through clinical and non-clinical services, and clear management guidelines.
- 4. Highlight the importance of presumptive diagnosis** over complete diagnosis to encourage physicians to carry out early assessment.
- 5. Increase compensation and provide permanent employment contracts** to occupational therapists (OT), physiotherapists (PT), social workers, and nurses.
- 6. Ensure that people living with dementia receive coordinated care** by improving access to clinical services, non-clinical services, community support services, and home adaptations.
- 7. Establish and expand the availability of integrated community-based care** encompassing community support services, day programs, respite care, home care, memory clinics, occupational therapy, and medical interventions to retain the quality of life of people living with dementia.
- 8. Increase the provision of community-based care across Ontario** to ensure that quality of life of people living with dementia is sustained for longer across distinct regions and socio-economic groups.
- 9. Require social workers and community support organizations to have basic knowledge** to identify and respond to elder abuse within scope of practice, and to refer to appropriate resources, including legal consultants, to support people living with dementia.
- 10. Implement an emotion-focused model of dementia care** that encourages long-term care staff to look at the increased quality of life of residents living with dementia as the main indicator of their practice.
- 11. Complement the current plan** of expanding long-term care homes and building of new long-term care beds by ensuring that the sector has sufficient health human resource capacity and well-trained staff to provide adequate care for older Ontarians, particularly dementia care and behavioural support.
- 12. Create a province-wide dementia awareness campaign** to preserve individual rights of people living with dementia and their care partners and expand community support to sustain quality of life.

13. Develop and launch multi-year interventions with a robust evaluation framework instead of pilot programs to improve dementia care capacity and retention of support staff.

14. Ensure people living with dementia, their care partners, physicians, specialists, social workers, and other core staff are part of the discussion while developing and introducing new dementia care programs.

15. Introduce fully refundable tax rebates and/or access to direct funding programs for people living with dementia and their care partners to allow them to stay in the community for longer while also reducing the strain on long-term care homes.

**In Ontario, dementia is hallway healthcare.
Dementia is long-term care.
We can do better.**

Learn more and read the full report at

www.votedementia.ca



Alzheimer Society