



# IMPROVING HALLWAY MEDICINE IN ONTARIO THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

*The Standing Committee on Social Policy*

*Bill 74, People's Health Care Act, 2019*

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April 1, 2019

Mrs. Nina Tangri, M.P.P  
Chair, Standing Committee on Social Policy  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Mrs. Tangri,

Spinal Cord Injury Ontario would like to thank you and the Members of the Standing Committee for their work to date on the review of *Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act 2019*. We hope the recommendations we provide will be useful to you and the Committee Members. These recommendations were created through a consensus process developed in collaboration with the Spinal Cord Injury Community.

Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCIO) believes in creating connected communities and providing coordinated care across the continuum. We recognize that Ontario's health care system needs substantial reform and strongly support the current government's bold initiative to reduce bureaucratic red tape and make strategic investments in front line supports and services, including people with disabilities.

SCIO has a long and rich history of providing an ongoing, life-resource for people with spinal cord injuries, their friends, families, and service providers that starts at the onset of injury and carries through acute care, rehabilitation, and then into the community. Our organization assists people in rebuilding their lives and rekindling passion for life. We have been strengthening our expertise since 1945 when our organization was first started by returning WWII Veterans with spinal cord injuries. We provide community support services to people with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities across Ontario. From our beginnings, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario has been a leader in peer support, navigation, employment, and attendant services; as well as knowledge generation and advocacy – a time honored legacy that continues today.

Today less than 10% of people in Ontario use over 80% of all our health care resources, costing the taxpayers billions of dollars, crowding out hospital hallways and creating unnecessary waste in our health care system. Often, the largest receiver of the most critical health care services are people with disabilities. Therefore, it is integral that we serve this population in a time sensitive and coordinated manner to ensure that we have a functional health care structure that serves every person in Ontario in need of specialized and customized supports. The cost of doing nothing is a cost burden that our system can no longer afford.

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SCIO urges the standing committee to ensure provisions are in place for the newly formed Ontario Health Agency to work with us and other specialized disability organizations to create innovative solutions for our health care system pertaining to people with SCI and other related disabilities. The following recommendations have been determined as high priority areas by the SCI Community.

### **1. Invest in a PSW Recruitment and Retention Strategy**

In Ontario, health care providers continue to struggle when it comes to both attracting and retaining professional community support services such as personal support workers (PSW). The lack of PSWs in Ontario working in community settings has created a chronic staffing challenge, compromising quality of care for those who need it the most. As the demand for home and community support services grow, it is imperative that the industry has the skilled and professional workforce required to meet the increasing needs of a growing population. Presently, we are not incentivizing the importance of home based PSW services in comparison to long-term care or hospital settings in a sustainable fashion. We urge the Ontario Health Agency to invest in strategic initiatives to effectively attract and retain the required PSWs in home settings with specialized disability organizations.

### **2. Simplify the System by Which Ontarians Access Mobility Devices and Medical Supplies**

Many high needs users of the health care system in Ontario rely on necessary medical supplies and assistive devices to go about their daily lives. However, Ontario's Assistive Devices Program responsible for providing such assistance is fragmented and in need of repair. Currently, most mobility devices are facilitated by one vendor that is simply not meeting the volume of needs for people with disabilities. People with disabilities also find their health care is routinely compromised by the lack of affordable and available medical supplies required to keep them out of crowded hospital hallways and into the safety nets of their communities. We urge the Ontario Health Agency to investigate and fix this overtly bureaucratic and complex assistive devices and medical supply programs in our province. The necessary investment required to facilitate these essential wrap-around services will ensure effective and efficient outcomes in a person's health and wellbeing.

Effective, coordinated, and integrated community wrap-around services are imperative towards the success of this new health care model and will ensure that people in Ontario gain access to vital health care when they need it, where they need it, and at a cost that is sustainable to the province of Ontario.

We hope our feedback is helpful to the Committee Members as you work collaboratively to finalize Bill 74, *The People's Health Care Act, 2019*.

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Sincerely,

Dr. Stuart Howe  
Chief Executive Officer  
Spinal Cord Injury Ontario

Cc:

Deepak Anand, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario  
Mississauga—Malton  
Doly Begum, New Democratic Party of Ontario  
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