

Information Brief on
**Supportive Housing and
Long-Term Care**

What the MS Society recommends:

The Ontario government should continue to invest in supportive housing to help people with MS remain in their communities and should prioritize the development of supportive and accessible housing under Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

For individuals who require a higher level of care, the Government of Ontario should *immediately* use opportunities provided through the Long-Term Care Renewal Strategy and the development of long-term care regulations to create age-appropriate spaces for younger adults who live with MS and other disabilities or chronic illnesses.

Basic Facts:

- Access to supportive housing in Ontario is extremely limited. Waitlists of between 3 to 10 years have been reported in communities across Ontario. This is simply too long for individuals who face housing and care crises.
- In Budget 2009, the Government of Ontario announced more than \$360 million to help create new affordable housing for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities. In 2009, the federal government also committed to providing \$75 million over two years for the construction of social housing units for persons with disabilities.
- The MS Society applauds these initiatives and encourages both levels of governments to continue to invest in affordable housing. However, these dollars must not only create affordable housing, but also affordable *supportive* and *accessible* housing to help people with disabilities remain active and engaged in their communities by providing the care and support they need in their homes.
- Even with future improvements to supportive housing, some young adults with MS may still require institutional care. Right now, far too many young Ontarians end up in long term care facilities or nursing homes that were designed for frail elderly residents, which do not have the services and activities that would benefit younger disabled people.
- According to the Canadian Institute on Health Information (CIHI), in 2005–2006, just over one in six patients (17%) who received treatment in Ontario complex continuing care hospital beds was between 19 and 64 years old, and 56% (2,276 individuals) of this group had neurological conditions. Young adults with MS made up 10% (228 individuals) of the neurological group.
- This is of particular concern to the MS Society because of the early age of onset for MS. An individual with MS who enters a long-term care facility designed for the frail and elderly at 35 years of age may remain there for 40 years or more. Age-inappropriate living conditions often result in anxiety, depression, and longer-term

mental health issues that increase the already complex health needs of these individuals.

Opportunities for Change:

- The Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Agreement is a vehicle through which to provide more stable funding for supportive housing for people with disabilities. People with disabilities have not been included in recent funding announcements associated with the Agreement, although they are included in the target groups of the Agreement. The Agreement provides longer-term funding security for housing projects than do year-by-year budget announcements.
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is developing a 10 Year Affordable Housing Strategy. The development of supportive and accessible affordable housing is within the scope of this strategy.
- Through the Long-Term Care Renewal Strategy, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) will redevelop 35,000 long-term care beds – 3,500 beds annually - over 10 years to “ensure equitable access to quality long-term care home accommodation”¹.
- The Ministry will work with Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to prioritize renewal projects. MOHLTC is currently considering a number of policy and program design decisions, and the MS Society asks that they incorporate the needs of young people in long-term care into their province-wide planning activities.
- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is also creating new long-term care regulations. To date, the proposed regulations have not specifically addressed the issue of age.

Recommendations

Specifically, we call on the **Government of Ontario** to:

- Continue to invest in accessible, affordable, and supportive housing for people with disabilities and utilize the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Agreement to provide longer-term funding.
- Prioritize the development of supportive and accessible housing through Ontario’s Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Immediately allocate a portion of the Long-Term Care Renewal Strategy to create additional age-appropriate spaces for younger people who require long-term care.
- Develop regulations and policies regarding the placement of younger adults with MS and other disabilities to ensure they receive care in age-appropriate settings.

Local Health Integration Networks and municipalities should:

- Make accessible, affordable, and supportive housing a priority in their planning initiatives and work with the federal and provincial governments to ensure that development of these types of housing are adequately funded.

¹ As taken from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ltc_redev/redev_mn.html, October 10, 2008.