



Ontario Division

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VIA E-Mail and Chapter Mail

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Distribution:

Chapter/ Unit Chairs & Executive Directors
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Ontario Government and Community Social Action Committee
Ontario Executive Committee & Board
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Government Relations and Social Action Alert

➤ **Campaign to Restore Physiotherapy and Home Care Funding**

This is a special edition of the Government Relations and Social Action Alert to focus on a letter writing and phone campaign to educate MPPs about two very important issues that affect people with MS and their families across Ontario.

The Ontario Government and Community Social Action Committee hopes you will join in by calling or sending a letter to your local MPP (or MPPs if your chapter covers more than one riding) and ask for their help in restoring physician-prescribed physiotherapy and increase home care services for people with MS who have chronic health care needs. Tom Epp, chair, Ontario Division Board of Directors, has sent a letter this week to Minister of Health George Smitherman about these issues, as well.

Below are some speaking points on both issues and a sample letter that you can adapt to send to your MPP(s). (This information including the speaking points and sample letter is also being distributed through the chapter mail system. Please copy your letter to Minister of Health and Long-term Care George Smitherman. His mailing address is:

The Honourable George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2C4

The chapter mail package will include a list of MPPs by riding and an alphabetical list of MPPs with their contact information for your reference.

Thank you in advance for your assistance. If you have any questions, please give me a call at 1-800-268-7582, ext. 3007 or e-mail: deanna.groetzing@mssociety.ca I would also appreciate receiving a copy of any letter that you send to your MPPs.

Deanna Groetzing
Vice-President, Communications

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Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Ontario Division

Campaign to Restore Physiotherapy and Home Care Funding

Speaking Points

Physiotherapy Issue

- In May Ontario's 2004 Budget announced that the government as of April 1, 2005 would no longer fund physiotherapy services through OHIP, except to seniors who receive them through home care and long-term care facilities.
- More recently, Minister of Health and Long-term Care George Smitherman has said that OHIP would continue to fund physiotherapy services for people who receive home care or who live in long-term care facilities and through global hospital budgets for both inpatients and outpatients.
- Another group of people eligible for OHIP -paid physiotherapy are Ontario Disability Support Program recipients.
- The MS Society believes that the only criterion for determining eligibility for OHIP -paid physiotherapy services **should be a prescription by the physician.**
- Criteria that include what other services a person receives or where the services are delivered prevent the delivery of the best health care for people with MS.
- Research studies have demonstrated that maintenance rehabilitation including physiotherapy results in significant improvement in mobility, prevent deterioration and contributes to overall quality of life.

Home Care Issue

- The vast majority of people living with MS can live at home and care for themselves with support from caregivers and services provided in the home. Home care programs help reduce reliance on expensive institutional care and provide a better, more self-reliant lifestyle for people with chronic illness and disability.
- Often, even minimal home care support can reduce emergency room visits and hospital admissions, keep families together, and help people with MS maintain their independence.
- Community-based home care programs can replace the need for chronically ill patients and people with severe disabilities to stay in hospitals or move into long-term care facilities.
- Enabling people to receive more treatment at home:
 - Allows the health care system as a whole to operate more cost-efficiently;
 - Reduces pressure on acute care beds and emergency rooms by providing medical interventions in alternate settings, and using hospital resources only when needed;
 - Enables individuals to maintain their independence and dignity in their own homes and communities; and
 - Helps support family caregivers and sustain their commitment.
- The MS Society believes strongly that **Ontario needs consistent delivery of a province-wide program to provide home care services including homemaking services** for people with chronic, long-term diseases like MS.

SAMPLE LETTER

[To be printed on chapter letterhead]

[Insert date]

***[Insert MPP name], MPP
[Insert MPP address]***

Dear ***[Mr., Mrs., Ms.] [Insert MPP Name]:***

Members of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, ***[Insert Chapter name]*** Chapter, continue to be concerned about two issues that are affecting their health. People have told us they are worried about the decrease in access to physiotherapy services and about the continued problem in obtaining and keeping home care services. We would appreciate you making the Minister of Health and Long-term Care aware of our issues and working with your colleagues to solve them.

In the Ontario 2004 budget, the Minister of Finance announced that the government as of April 1, 2005 would no longer fund physiotherapy services through OHIP, except to seniors who receive them through home care and long-term care facilities. More recently the Ministry of Health has said that physiotherapy services will be provided through home care and long-term care facilities and through global hospital budgets for inpatients and outpatients. In addition, Ontario Disability Support Program recipients would continue to receive OHIP -paid physiotherapy.

However, this will still leave many people with MS without physiotherapy services. In recent years, a number of research studies have demonstrated that active rehabilitation including physiotherapy has significant positive results for people with MS including improvement in mobility and prevention of deterioration.

[Add a personal example, if possible, of someone who has benefited from physiotherapy services. Remember, because of privacy legislation, do not use names of people without obtaining their written or verbally confirmed consent.]

The MS Society urges a very simple solution -- that government funding should be provided for physiotherapy services that are physician-prescribed. This criterion should be what determines OHIP funding and not what other services a person receives or where the services are delivered.

We also ask for your help in ensuring that home care in Ontario includes services for people who have chronic diseases like MS. While the recent First Ministers meeting resulted in a 10-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care, the MS Society was disappointed to see that the plan only addresses acute home care needs and end-of-life care.

Home care helps to avoid long-term institutional care and preserves the autonomy, dignity and quality of life of people who receive it. Homemaking and other home care services can make the difference between someone being able to remain in their home or having to move to a costly long-term care institution. We believe it is no less deserving of support and funding.

Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

[Insert name of chapter chair or other director]

[Insert title]

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

[Insert chapter name]

Cc. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care