

**Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère de la Santé  
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Dear CARP Members,

I am writing you about the improvements our government recently announced to expand access to publicly-funded physiotherapy, exercise, and falls prevention programs in Ontario.

I want you to know that I am committed to providing better care and getting better value for our health dollars, which is why our government had to make improvements to the delivery of these services.

While this change is necessary, my ministry is working hard to ensure a smooth transition for everyone who currently relies on these services.

Here's what you need to know about why we decided to change how publicly-funded physiotherapy and exercise are delivered:

- Under the old system, only 90 of over 1000 physiotherapy clinics across Ontario could be paid by OHIP on a fee-for-service basis to provide publicly funded physiotherapy. This exclusive arrangement resulted in large geographic inequities in service across Ontario. For example, only two such clinics serve all of northern Ontario and both are located in Sault Ste. Marie. That means that anyone in Northern Ontario needing physiotherapy would have to travel to Sault Ste. Marie to access it, or choose to pay for it themselves. That's just not equitable access. Under the new model, we are ending the exclusive status of these clinics and will offer services to more seniors in more locations across the province.
- Four companies are currently responsible for two-thirds of all physiotherapy OHIP billings, primarily for services offered in long-term care and retirement homes. This is the fastest growing cost in health care. We have observed that one of the primary reasons for these rising costs is a rise in group exercise classes which are being billed to the government as physiotherapy, even though only a fraction of these services are provided by physiotherapists. We can put an end to this skyrocketing spending and provide care for twice as many seniors in the community by removing the exclusive ability for these companies to profit from nearly unlimited OHIP physiotherapy billings. The companies describe our changes as 'cuts', when in fact, the government is increasing the annual budget for these services.
- The wait list for in-home physiotherapy is too long. Seniors who can't leave their home to get physiotherapy shouldn't have to wait. That's why, under the new model, Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) will offer in-home physiotherapy for 60,000 more seniors and people with mobility issues (150,000 total) to clear current waitlists.

I hope you can see that the need to change was clear. I also appreciate that there are questions about how the new system will work. Here's what you need to know about the changes that we're implementing:

- It's important to know that individuals who currently need physiotherapy, exercise, and falls prevention programs in retirement homes, long-term care homes and in the community will continue to have access to those services. We're committed to ensuring a smooth transition in the services being provided.

- Moreover, our changes will expand the delivery of physiotherapy and exercise classes to over 200,000 more Ontarians in the community, retirement homes and long-term care homes.
- All seniors living in retirement homes with assessed need for physiotherapy will have access to it. Seniors who need in-home physiotherapy will be assessed in consultation with current physiotherapy providers to determine treatment requirements and provide service going forward. Clinic-based physiotherapy service will be available in more communities across Ontario for 90,000 more Ontarians (150,000 total). Under our changes, the ministry will also offer exercise and falls prevention classes to 68,000 more seniors (130,000 total) in community settings like retirement homes and we will work to ensure that exercise classes continue to be offered in locations where they are currently available.
- In our long-term care homes, all residents will continue to have access to exercise classes, and appropriate, individualized physiotherapy will be available for all residents who need it. Each long-term care home will receive funding for physiotherapy directly. All residents who need physiotherapy will be assessed by a registered physiotherapist, who will determine a treatment plan that includes the frequency and duration of physiotherapy based on their individual needs as part of their plan of care. That's why our reforms have the support of the Ontario Physiotherapy Association.

I appreciate the hard work of every front-line health care provider who cares for our seniors. But we need this care to be provided in a sustainable manner. The result of our improvements will be better care for more Ontarians and better value for our health care dollars.

These changes may not be welcomed by all clinics, especially those that stand to lose financially. However I remain committed to a smooth transition to a new model that will provide service to more seniors. I hope you will share these facts with people who are concerned.

With your support, I am confident that we can make an enormous difference in the lives of seniors, helping to stay healthy, at home and out of the hospital.

For more information about how Ontario is providing more seniors with access to exercise and physiotherapy, please visit: [www.ontario.ca/physiotherapy](http://www.ontario.ca/physiotherapy) or call the Seniors' INFOLine at 1-888-910-1999.

Together, we can make healthy change happen.

Sincerely,



Deb Matthews  
Minister

c. Hon. Mario Sergio, Minister Responsible for Seniors