



**Issue Note**  
**Re-introducing the Ontario Budget 2024**  
**Last Updated: March 26, 2024**

**ISSUE:**

On March 26, 2024, the Ontario government introduced the 2024 provincial budget. As part of the Budget, the government announced **\$396 million over three years for mental health and additions** for community-based mental health and addiction services funded by Ministry of Health.

This issue note is to help branches and CMHA Ontario address any media or public enquiries about the budget.

**KEY MESSAGES – TOP LEVEL:**

- While we appreciate the government’s commitment to supportive housing and additional targeted investments to maintain existing mental health and addictions programs, the lack of base budget increase fails to acknowledge the health human resources crisis our sector faces.
- The community mental health and addictions sector urgently needs more infrastructure funding to help retain and recruit staff and provide stability for our sector.
- After years of flatlined investment, last year’s stabilization funding was a positive step, but more is required if we are to best meet the increasing needs of the people we serve.
- The strength of our sector lies in the people and organizations that provide client care. Without sufficient funding to ensure that we retain our highly valued workforce, we will lose capacity and with it the ability to serve more Ontarians.
- We will continue to advocate for additional funding to support our clients, those in need of service and the people providing care.

**KEY MESSAGES – HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES**

- Our current HHR crisis is the worst in the history of community mental health and addictions.
- Our sector helps individuals who can be the hardest to serve. Yet our staff are among the lowest paid healthcare workers.
- When compared to others doing the same job in other health sectors, our staff are often paid 20 to 30 per cent less.
- We tend to serve individuals who have increasingly complex needs, yet we are not paid a fair wage. This must change.



### **KEY MESSAGES – SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

- We thank the government for investing an additional \$152 million over the next three years to support individuals facing unstable housing conditions and dealing with mental health and addictions challenges.
- Supportive housing models are a crucial part of recovery for individuals with mental health issues. This funding will assist in getting more people housed and get them the mental health support they need.
- We hope this three-year fund will complement an existing sister fund from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs called the Housing Homeless Prevention Program. This money flows to our municipal partners who create services and programs to support homeless populations.
- Our municipal partners share our concern for the lack of supports for people living with mental health and addictions issues. For example, the Ontario Municipal Social Service Association said that providing mental health and addictions support takes up 95 per cent of the conversation but 5 per cent of their budgets.

### **KEY MESSAGES – OPIOIDS / DRUG TOXICITY CRISIS**

- We are disappointed that the government failed to meaningfully address the opioid and drug toxicity crisis playing out in communities across Ontario.
- Ontario is facing an increase in the harms related to opioids, with an increase in emergency room visits, hospitalizations and fatal overdoses.
- Data shows the opioid poisoning crisis in Ontario is worsening. The mortality rate due to opioid toxicity remains 44 per cent higher than in 2019 (pre pandemic).
- We urge the government to take greater action on this issue, including approving more consumption and treatment services sites where people who use drugs can do so more safely while also having access to community-based services.

### **2023-2024 BUDGET BACKGROUND – MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS FUNDING**

The health sector budget is projected at \$84.5 billion with the majority going to hospitals.

As expected, there was no base-budget increase for community mental health and addictions, but the government did make the following investments for our sector:

#### **MHA SECTOR FUNDING**

- No base budget increase for the sector but a \$396 million three-year investment to support the “stabilization, improved access and expansion of existing mental health and addictions services and programs.”



- It's unclear how much of the three-year investment will be for new programs or services, but the budget outlines that the investment includes:
  - \$124 million over three years to support the continuation of the Addictions Recovery Fund. The fund supports:
    - Maintaining 383 addictions treatment beds for adults who need intensive supports, helping to stabilize and provide care for approximately 7,000 clients each year;
    - Three Mobile Mental Health Clinics to provide a suite of mental health and addictions services to individuals living in remote, rural and underserved communities; and
    - Three police-partnered Mobile Crisis Response Teams to support individuals in a mental health or addictions crisis.
- Ongoing support for the innovative Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program
- In conversations CMHA Ontario has had with the Minister of Health's office, the government may also be examining further investments in rapid access to addiction medicine clinics, but it's unclear if these are hospital- or community-based RAAM clinics.

### **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

- The government is investing an additional \$152 million over the next three years to support individuals facing unstable housing conditions and dealing with mental health and addictions challenges.
- This funding will go towards a suite of supportive housing initiatives designed to bolster support for vulnerable populations, such as:
  - Providing rent supplements for up to 10,679 supportive housing units to mitigate the impact of increasing rent costs due to housing market conditions.
  - Maintaining 1,137 dedicated supportive housing units with expiring operating agreements
  - Providing Indwell Community Homes funding for rent supplements and mental health and addictions support services to maintain supportive housing for over 640 individuals.
  - Maintaining supportive housing for Salus in Ottawa and the Canadian Mental Health Association in North Bay and District, through investments to repair and renovate buildings, as well as to relocate up to 79 displaced low-income tenants with mental health and/or addictions needs.
  - \$9 million over three years for Stonehenge Therapeutic Community and Guelph Community Health Centre to support individuals with complex, high acuity mental health and substance use issues.
- ***The government will be considering new projects, starting next fiscal year, to build more supportive housing units across the province***



## **PRIMARY CARE**

- \$546M in Primary Health Care over three years to connect approximately 600,000 more people to team-based primary care through new and expanded interprofessional care teams.
- Interprofessional primary care teams connect people to a range of health professionals including doctors, nurse practitioners, registered and practical nurses, physiotherapists, social workers and dietitians, among others. These teams enhance the quality of patient care, improve health outcomes, and increase the efficiency of health service delivery by relieving pressures on emergency departments and walk-in clinics.
- This investment will also provide support to all existing interprofessional primary care teams through ongoing operational funding for their facilities and supplies so that they continue to provide high-quality care and effective direct service delivery to patients.

## **HOSPITALS**

- Investing an additional \$965 million, including a base budget increase of four per cent, for a second year in a row, to ensure public hospitals are able to meet patients' needs and to increase access to high-quality care.
- More than \$50 billion over the next 10 years in hospital infrastructure, including close to \$36 billion in capital grants for more than 50 hospital projects that would add about 3,000 new beds. Recent milestones included:
  - Queensway Carleton Hospital — Phase 3B Mental Health Redevelopment: In November 2023, completed renovations to increase acute mental health beds (to a total of 26 beds) and expand and improve space for inpatient and outpatient mental health programs.
  - Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care — Additional Acute Mental Health Inpatient Beds Project: In December 2023, announced the project to renovate over 10,000 square feet of existing space to add 20 additional acute mental health beds to the facility. Once complete, the new acute mental health inpatient unit will connect more people and their families to a range of services, including psychiatry, psychology, occupational and recreation therapy, and addictions counselling.
- Past funding:
  - 2023 budget provided more than \$48 billion over the next 10 years in hospital infrastructure, including over \$32 billion in hospital capital grants, to support more than 50 hospital projects that would add 3,000 new beds over 10 years to increase access to reliable, quality care.
  - Centre for Addiction and Mental Health – Phase 1D Redevelopment Project: In December 2022, Ontario released the RFP for the Forensic Building component to the Phase 1D Redevelopment Project. These critical expansion and redevelopment



- plans provide inpatient capacity of up to 214 beds for the forensic mental health program, including 33 new inpatient beds.
- Queensway Carleton Hospital – Mental Health Redevelopment Project: In December 2022, construction of the new addition was completed. This project adds two new acute mental health beds and expands space for mental health and addictions programs and services. The remaining renovations are scheduled to be complete by November 2023.
  - Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre – Phase 2 Redevelopment Project: In April 2022, Ontario awarded the construction contract for the project. This project will improve access to mental health and addictions services by providing six new beds and will house one 15-bed wing for women and one 15-bed wing for men, with spaces for home living, treatment and after-care services. The project is scheduled to be complete in November 2023

### **COMMUNITY/HOSPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS**

- \$620 million over 10 years for the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund and the Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund
  - This funding will allow health care system partners to address urgent infrastructure renewal needs such as upgrades or replacements of roofs, windows, security systems, fire alarms and back-up generators.
  - These investments will ensure funds are available for much-needed equipment upgrades, building repairs, and to extend the life of hospital and community infrastructure.
- \$500 million over 10 years for small hospital projects and **community health programs**.
  - These smaller hospital and community projects can create much needed capacity in the short term, and community health programs prevent hospital visits that put pressure on emergency departments as well as hospital admissions.

### **CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**

- In addition to the 22 current locations<sup>1</sup>, Ontario plans to expand the Youth Wellness Hubs network with five new locations in Brampton, Thunder Bay, Oxford County, Port Hope and Vaughan

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- Algoma Region Youth Wellness Hub
  - Central Toronto Youth Wellness Hub
  - Chatham-Kent Youth Wellness Hub
  - Cornwall & SDG Youth Wellness Hub (Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry)/Rockland & PR Youth Wellness Hub (Prescott Russell)
  - Haliburton County Youth Wellness Hub
  - Kenora Youth Wellness Hub
  - KFLA Region Youth Wellness Hub (Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox, & Addington)
  - London-Middlesex Youth Wellness Hub
  - Malton Youth Wellness Hub



- The government is investing \$8.3 million over three years to add another five hubs increasing the total number of hubs to 32.

### **INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH**

- \$94 million over three years to enhance the well-being of Indigenous and Northern communities:
  - \$60 million over three years to maintain mental health and addictions services, including clinical supports, community mental health and well-being initiatives, and opioid programming.
  - \$15 million over three years to support the ongoing delivery of Indigenous public health programs, including vaccination initiatives to improve health outcomes.
  - \$11 million over three years to enhance early detection and management of foot complications arising from diabetes for Indigenous communities. Through prevention and earlier detection, this program aims to improve health outcomes for those living with diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
  - \$8 million over three years to strengthen prevention initiatives in Indigenous communities, targeting diabetes, smoking and chronic diseases.

### **NORTHERN AND RURAL HEALTH CARE**

- \$50 million over three years to enhance and stabilize health care capacity within Northern and rural communities.
  - Funding will also support the expansion of existing rural generalist pathways for physicians and fund additional supports and upskilling for other health care workers
- Three Mobile Mental Health Clinics to provide a suite of mental health and addictions services to individuals living in remote, rural and underserved communities (part of \$396M investment)
- \$45 million over three years to enhance the Northern Health Travel Grant Program

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- Niagara Region Youth Wellness Hub
  - North Simcoe Youth Wellness Hub
  - Renfrew County Youth Wellness Hub
  - Sagamok Anishnawbek Youth Wellness Hub
  - Sarnia-Lambton Youth Wellness Hub
  - Scarborough Youth Wellness Hub
  - Sudbury Youth Wellness Hub
  - Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub
  - Timmins Youth Wellness Hub
  - Toronto East Youth Wellness Hub
  - Wellington-Guelph Youth Wellness Hub
  - West Toronto Youth Wellness Hub
  - Windsor-Essex Youth Wellness Hub



## **HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE**

- \$743 million over three years to continue to address immediate health care staffing needs, as well as to grow the workforce including:
  - Making the Extern Program permanent (training program to work in hospitals)
  - Making the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program permanent (accrediting internationally certified nurses in Ontario)
  - \$128 million over the next three years to support the sustained enrolment increases of nursing spaces at publicly assisted colleges and universities
  - Merging the Clinical Scholar Program
  - Upskilling nurses
  - Stabilizing Emergency Department staffing

## **HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE**

- \$2 billion over three years to support the home and community care workforce and to accelerate the expansion of home care services.
  - The government continues to invest in transforming the home care system, including new models of care and modernizing the Client Health and Related Information System (CHRIS), the digital infrastructure system supporting home care.
  - For community care, the government is providing supports for the workforce to strengthen adult day programs, meal services, transportation and assisted living services.

## **STUDENT SUPPORTS**

- The government introduced the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024 on February 26, 2024. If passed, this Act would require colleges and universities to have mental health policies in place that should include clear and transparent information about programs and supports available to students, along with policies to address racism and hate, including but not limited to antisemitism and Islamophobia.