

SUMMARY

Developing Ontario's Dementia Strategy: A Discussion Paper

The Ontario government invites you to contribute your thoughts on how to better support Ontarians with dementia and their care partners.

Your feedback is important and will help inform the development of Ontario's dementia strategy. To read the full discussion paper or to share your views, visit ontario.ca/dementia. You can also provide comments by sending an e-mail to dementiastrategy@ontario.ca.

Introduction

Dementia is not a part of normal aging. It is a group of conditions that affect the brain and cause problems with memory, thinking, speaking or performing familiar tasks.

These problems gradually worsen over time and interfere with a person's ability to carry out daily activities and to live independently.

While living with dementia can be challenging, it is important to remember that dementia does not change who a person is. Many people with dementia are capable of pursuing their interests, making decisions about their health, maintaining relationships and aging well. It is with this in mind that Ontario is committed to developing a comprehensive, forward looking dementia strategy.

This strategy will ensure that people with dementia and their care partners:

- Are treated with respect;
- Have access to information that allows them to make the best possible choices regarding their health and well-being; and
- Are living well with dementia, helped by appropriate services and supports where and when they need them.

Prevalence

It is estimated that about 228,000 Ontarians are living with dementia. As Ontario's population ages, it is expected that these numbers will rise to 255,000 people in 2020 and over 430,000 people by 2038.

Economic, Health and Social Impact

Dementia can have a substantial impact on families, friends, care partners, and people living with dementia. For example, caregiving responsibilities can lead to high levels of stress and people living with dementia may experience stigma and increased dependency.

Between 2008 and 2038, dementia is projected to cost Ontario close to \$325 billion. This includes health care costs, lost wages and out-of-pocket costs experienced by people with dementia and their care partners.

Creating Supportive and Inclusive Communities for People with Dementia and their Care Partners

With the right care and supports, it is possible for people with dementia and their care partners to live well, while ensuring the sustainability of our health care system.

Based on research and our work to date, six themes were identified that will guide the development of Ontario's dementia strategy. These are described briefly below.

Supports for People Living with Dementia

Making Ontario an exceptional place to live with dementia means supporting a person from diagnosis to end-of-life. This includes receiving an accurate diagnosis as soon as possible and recognizing that a variety of services are needed that respond to the unique physical, psychological and social needs of a person with dementia.

What Do You Think?

What are some characteristics of high quality programs that help people with dementia live well?

Accessing Dementia Services

Empowering people with dementia and their care partners to live well means ensuring they have access to the right information and services at the right time. However, some people may have difficulty finding out what services are available and how to access them.

What Do You Think?

What initiatives have been successful in improving access to care for people with dementia and their care partners?

Coordinated Care

Coordinated care is vital to improving the experience of people with dementia and their care partners. Coordination ensures services are easy to navigate and that, as needs change, transitions between health

care or other service providers are seamless.

What Do You Think?

What would make it easier for people with dementia, their care partners and care providers to navigate available services or supports?

Supports for Care Partners

Being a care partner can be a rewarding experience, but can also take an enormous physical, emotional and financial toll on a person. Enabling care partners to live well means ensuring that they are supported in their caregiving responsibilities and in maintaining their health and independence.

What Do You Think?

What services or supports are effective in assisting care partners of people living with dementia? Why?

Well Trained Dementia Workforce

An adequately staffed and well trained dementia care workforce is important to helping Ontarians live well with dementia. This includes offering accessible education and supports to help these individuals lead change within their organizations.

What Do You Think?

What opportunities should be available to help health care staff acquire key skills and knowledge important for dementia care?

Awareness, Stigma and Brain Health

Raising awareness about dementia risk factors and reducing stigma associated with dementia are important for living well. There are also opportunities to promote brain health and encourage healthy lifestyles, before and after a dementia diagnosis.

What Do You Think?

What kinds of public awareness and health promotion programs could help reduce stigma or improve Ontarians' understanding of brain health and dementia?