

Canadian Assistive Devices Association
Speaking Notes, MPP Breakfast

Thank you for inviting me to speak this morning at your association's MPP breakfast, and to Bill Laidlaw for extending the opportunity to speak to you about the Progressive Conservative vision for health care in the province of Ontario.

The Canadian Assistive Devices Association represents our country's manufacturers, distributors and vendors of medical devices and supplies. Your member organizations provide an invaluable service to patients across Canada—you help them to walk, hear, see, eat, and breathe better. Your products help provide independence, mobility, and a higher quality of life for seniors as well as individuals with disabilities.

I'd also like to thank you for the important role you play in Ontario's economy.

Nationally, the medical devices industry is worth 1.4 billion dollars annually. Ontario accounts for a significant proportion of this industry—44% of the expenditures, or \$620 million dollars.

Approximately 80% of the manufacturing and distribution companies for assistive devices have their head offices right here in Ontario, including 100 distributors and manufacturers, as well as nearly 250 vendors. This industry provides meaningful employment to over 6,000 Ontarians.

So not only do your products make life better for seniors and people with disabilities, but your industry provides valuable employment and investments here in Ontario.

What is so important about assistive devices is that they keep Ontarians healthy, independent, and able to live at home safely, for longer. This is going to become even more important as we are faced with an aging population that will require increasing amounts of health care in the next five to ten years.

The challenges of our aging population mean that now, more than ever, we really need to take a serious look at how we deliver health care in Ontario. Health costs have been growing by six to eight per cent a year, even though the economy has only grown at just over half that rate. These ballooning expenditures, combined with the "boomer tsunami", means our current model is simply not sustainable.

This is also a time where we simply cannot afford waste and skyrocketing executive compensation in health care. Scandals like eHealth and ORNGE wasted millions of taxpayer dollars, and unfortunately the waste under the Liberal government continues.

Last week, I brought forward a motion in Public Accounts Committee to have the Auditor General review the province's Community Care Access Centres, which was passed unanimously. Over the past 3 years, CEO salaries of the province's 14 CCACs have increased by an average of 36%, to an average of \$234,000 in 2012. Over the same period, personal support workers earned around \$20,000, and did not see any raises. Moreover, there is evidence that up to 40% of the funding given to CCAC's from the provincial government goes to administration, instead of front-line care.

This cannot continue. Now, more than ever, we need to eliminate excess administration and get executive salaries under control, and then direct this money into innovation and transforming our healthcare.

We are currently operating our health care system based on an outdated, reactive model of care that primarily addresses acute episodes. We need to transition to a twenty-first century model of care, one that is proactive and based on chronic disease management, health promotion, and prevention.

We also need to refocus our attention on patients and families, to make sure our model of care centers around their needs. This will mean, for example, that people need to have a wider range of options and personal choice for what home care services they want.

I think there is an important role for assistive devices to play in this innovation of health care provision, both in terms of chronic disease management, as well the shift towards a patient-centered model of care.

Currently, the province funds assistive devices through the Assistive Devices Program, an arm of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. This program funds a variety of products from oxygen ventilators to wheelchairs and walkers, to prosthetics and hearing

aids.

The primary funding model used by the ADP is the 75/25 co-pay model. The ministry funds 75% of the purchase of a product, and the client or a third party funding agency, pays the remainder.

But at the moment, there are significant delays by the Ministry in the processing of patient applications for the ADP program. In some cases, patients are suffering because they are unable to access necessary medical devices in a timely manner, but we know that all too often it is the providers of the devices who suffer financially because of the significant delay between the supply of the device to the patient and payment for the device to the provider.

This is neither fair for the patient or the provider. If we want to move towards a more patient-centered approach to health care in the province, we need to start by making sure that funding for assistive and mobility devices is available as promptly as possible.

This is because assistive devices prevent injuries, and thus prevent hospital stays as a result of falls and accidents. Keeping clients out of hospitals helps to contain health care costs. It also helps keep people in their homes for longer. And we know that keeping seniors in their homes, in surroundings they are most familiar with, leads to better health outcomes. We also know that home care options are more cost effective than other options, such as long-term care homes.

So how do we get to a twenty first century model of health care in Ontario, one that focuses on patient centered care, and shifts from being reactive to proactive?

I'm going to focus on three key points from the PC "Paths to Prosperity: A healthier Ontario" white paper. These are paths that I think interface very well with the goals of the Canadian Assistive Devices Association, and are necessary reforms to our health care system.

First, we need to make health care decisions grounded in evidence, to achieve greater quality and value of care. We need dramatically better patient databases, so we are able to track patients with similar conditions, look at what treatments they got, how

much those treatments cost, and how their health progressed as a result. These types of databases would be a benefit to your industry, since we would be able to see, concretely, the positive impact of value assistive and mobility devices.

Second, we need to build our system to treat chronic disease as the leading health challenge of our time, not an afterthought in a system designed around acute care. Chronic disease is the most significant challenge our health system face. The 170,000 patients with the most complex chronic disease use \$9 billion in health care in Ontario each year; the 500,000 patients who are the next most complex use another \$9 billion.

The good news is that the best care—care that is close to home— is often less expensive than what we provide today. If we focus on providing home and community based care, and enhance patients' abilities to live at home, we can avoid unnecessary, expensive acute hospital visits. Part of this change involves ensuring that people have the necessary mobility and assistive devices to stay at home longer.

Third, and finally, we need to shift resources and incentives to promote care closer to home, particularly by expanding home care availability, and promoting more types of care in the home. We should also allow pharmacists, paramedics, nurses, and nurse practitioners to provide more types of advice and treatment where it is most convenient and beneficial for patients.

We cannot continue down the path of trying to solve all our health care problems by throwing money at them. Not only can we not afford it, but the truth is this approach has gotten in the way of much need innovations and improvements in care.

In conclusion, I believe that the already important role that assistive and mobility devices play in health care in Ontario is about to become even more essential. Thank you for inviting me here today to share our Progressive Conservative vision for health care, and thank you for all the contributions your members make to keeping Ontarians healthy, independent, and living a high quality of life.