



## **RAMPING UP: Providing More Ontarians with Disabilities the Means to Remain in Their Own Homes Safely and Independently**

*Submission to the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy  
Minister of Finance  
February 2022*

### **Abstract**

This submission details options for provincial investment in solutions that enable people with disabilities to remain at home and in the community. First, the Home and Vehicle Modification Program (HVMP) provides direct grants to modify homes and/or vehicles for Ontarians with disabilities of any age, delivering benefits such as the ability to remain at home safely and independently, use avoidance for provincially-funded services, and creating economic advantages in communities across Ontario. Second, the After Stroke program supports survivors of stroke and their families to navigate the path forward after a stroke. Lastly, investment in the home and community support sector enables Ontarians to receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

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# Part 1: Ramping Up the Home and Vehicle Modification Program

## Executive Summary

March of Dimes Canada's Home and Vehicle Modification Program (HVMP) is currently funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and administered by March of Dimes Canada through a Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA). The HVMP has been exceptionally well-served by this partnership; March of Dimes Canada thanks MCCSS staff for over 20 years of effective and collaborative administration and management, and looks forward to continuing to work with both MCCSS and the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA) as a key ministry partner.

Demand for this program has grown, **yet funding has not increased for over 20 years.**

**Only 36% of eligible applicants could be served within our current funding envelope.**

March of Dimes Canada is requesting additional provincial investment in HVMP to meet the needs of Ontarians with disabilities as they emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to address inflationary pressures that have exacerbated the issue of affordability. March of Dimes Canada is positioned to scale up the HVMP quickly and effectively, making Ontario a North American leader in direct funding for these types of modifications.

***"This program will help you live a full life that is independent."***

**- Donald Turner, HVMP grantee  
Blenheim, ON**

Additional investment in the HVMP aligns with provincial government priorities through direct, immediate funding for essential home and vehicle modifications that deliver personal and economic benefits. Accessible modifications allow Ontarians with disabilities to remain safe and independent in their homes and participate meaningfully in their

communities, as well as delivering local economic benefits in communities across the province.

Modifications can avoid or delay expensive hospitalization, institutionalization, or attendant care services, providing a more cost-effective solution for Ontarians with disabilities to receive the right care, at the right place, at the right time:

- Compared to a hospital bed or long-term care, respectively \$1,500 and \$700 daily, **a home modification is only \$41 per day if costs are spread over just the first year of use.**<sup>1</sup>
- A home modification that enables the recipient to avoid or defer the need for attendant care services, **saves \$120,000 in Home and Community Care services in the first three years.**<sup>2</sup>
- Modifications further promote aging-in-place for Ontario seniors, achieving the dignity and comfort they richly deserve – important when over three-quarters (78 per cent) of

<sup>1</sup> See page 4.

<sup>2</sup> See page 5.

Canadians want to age in their current homes, but **just 26 per cent predict they’ll be able to do so.**<sup>3</sup>

In addition, March of Dimes Canada recommends that a full review of the HVMP is undertaken, with a view to modernizing policy guidelines to ensure the program is flexible and accessible, ensuring this twenty-year-old program better meets the needs of Ontarians of all ages with disabilities today.

### Options Summary

**March of Dimes Canada is presenting three options for flowing additional, annualized investment into the HVMP** to scale up operations as quickly as possible to meet the growing need for this important program. These options do not include consideration of program administration costs, which are proposed to be negotiated in a renewed TPA with an understanding that administrative infrastructure is in place to meet existing funding and program requirements.

The options proposed are designed to address either short-, medium- or longer-term program needs. Each option substantially increases the number of Ontarians receiving grants, although with an affiliated decrease in impact:

<b>Option 1:</b> \$50 million annual investment, including current transfer	<b>Option 2:</b> \$30 million annual investment, including current transfer	<b>Option 3:</b> \$10.5 million annual investment in addition to current transfer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2,000 more Ontarians</b> receive funding each year to meet longer term program needs</li> <li>• <b>All expected eligible grant applicants funded</b> (~2,900 projects in total)</li> <li>• <b>Increased</b> grant caps to reflect current market rates:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ \$25,000 for home modifications</li> <li>○ \$20,000 for vehicle modifications</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2,000 more Ontarians</b> receive funding each year to meet longer term program needs</li> <li>• <b>All expected eligible grant applications funded</b> (~2,900 projects in total)</li> <li>• Grant caps <b>remain</b> at current rates (\$15,000 for home modifications and \$15,000 for vehicle modifications)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>900 more Ontarians</b> receive funding each year, to address short-term needs</li> <li>• <b>Twice the number of eligible applicants funded</b> (~1,800 projects in total)</li> <li>• Grant caps <b>remain</b> at current rates (\$15,000 for home modifications and \$15,000 for vehicle modifications)</li> </ul>

## Background

March of Dimes Canada strongly believes that Ontarians with disabilities have the right to a safe home and a vehicle which meets their needs – just like all other Ontarians. March of Dimes Canada began to deliver the HVMP on behalf of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) over 20 years ago through a Transfer Partner Agreement (TPA) which remains in place today. The TPA stipulates that MCCSS transfers \$9.245M for HVMP grants to eligible applicants of up to \$15,000 (lifetime maximum) for home modifications and

<sup>3</sup> March of Dimes Canada, 2021, *Transforming Lives through Home Modification: A March of Dimes Canada National Survey*, <https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/aboutus/newsroom/pr/Pages/MODC-Home-Modification-Survey.aspx>

\$15,000 (10-year maximum due to vehicle aging) for vehicle modifications. In order to administer the program effectively, March of Dimes Canada receives an additional \$1.4M grant from MCCSS.

March of Dimes Canada administers HVMP on a monthly application cycle, processing applications based on criteria as set out in the program policy guidelines. In accordance with the agreement, **no waiting list is maintained**; applicants who do not receive a grant in one application cycle are able to repeat their application the following month. Eligibility is based on demonstrated need for substantial modifications due to permanent or recurring disability that puts at risk the applicant's ability to remain in their home and participate meaningfully in their community. **Program guidelines require March of Dimes Canada to prioritize applications** which minimize/eliminate life safety risks, prevent or enable discharge from hospitalization or institutionalization, and avoid loss of employment or income.

### Key Program Statistics

The *HVMP Data Report for 2019-20* (the last full year of available statistics, attached as Appendix 'A') shows March of Dimes Canada received **2,841 eligible applications**. Given the current transfer amount and prioritization guidelines, **903 grants were awarded (36% of applicants)**.

- 86% of all eligible applications were for home modifications; 10% were for vehicle modifications and 4% applied for both home and vehicle modification grants.
- Seniors (65+) accounted for 63% of all eligible applicants; adult Ontarians with disabilities (18-64) made up 33% of eligible applicants, with children (0-18) with disabilities at 4%.
- Adults and children with disabilities predominantly applied for vehicle modifications, while seniors applied mostly for home modifications. We may conclude that adults and children required vehicle modifications in order to meaningfully engage in their communities, while seniors required safety and security in their own home, avoiding institutionalization.

*"[HVMP] is necessary for people to survive. It means equity for all. It helps to let people live full lives, but it needs to be more."*

- Emma G., HVMP grantee  
Ottawa, ON

Applicants whose requests were approved ("grantees") largely followed the application statistics regarding home or vehicle modification grants.

- 84% of grant approvals were for home modifications; 15% were for vehicle modifications and 1% of grantees received both home and vehicle modification grants.
- 60% of grantees were seniors; 34% of grantees were adults with disabilities and 6% of grants were for children under age 18.
- 61% of vehicle modification grantees were adults with disabilities, while 69% of home modification grantees were seniors.
- In 2019-20, total vehicle modification grants were \$1.6M; total home modification grants were \$7.7M.

March of Dimes Canada has established service delivery benchmarks to ensure the HVMP is delivered in a timely manner, serving the needs of applicants and grantees. In 2019-20, the *Service Delivery Benchmarks* report (attached as Appendix 'B') indicates:

- Applicants received a response indicating the outcome of their application within an average of six days.
- Modifications were completed within an average of 58 days of approval.
- The full process, from application receipt to project completion, was accomplished within an average of 170 days.

**Program Impact**

March of Dimes Canada annually undertakes to gather and analyze information from applicants and grantees regarding the modifications they received and the impact of the modifications they have funded by the program. In the 2018 *Consumer Satisfaction Survey* (attached as Appendix 'C'), grantees reported a high level of satisfaction with both the application and granting process, as well as the service they received from contractors and with their completed modifications. Grantees often contract to local small renovation or vehicle modification businesses, resulting in local economic benefits and community engagement.

**“Government should be helping people get home.”**

- Colleen Mohrham, HVMP grantee Nepean, ON

Most importantly, completed modifications enable many grantees to stay safe and independent at home, avoiding unnecessary institutionalization, with the ripple effect of savings to the hospital and long-term care system. Modifications achieved grantees’ goals of avoiding hospital or long-term care (86%) and returning home from hospital (89%). Compared to the high cost of care in hospital or in long-term care, home modifications provide lower cost solution for Ontarians to receive the right care, at the right place, at the right time.

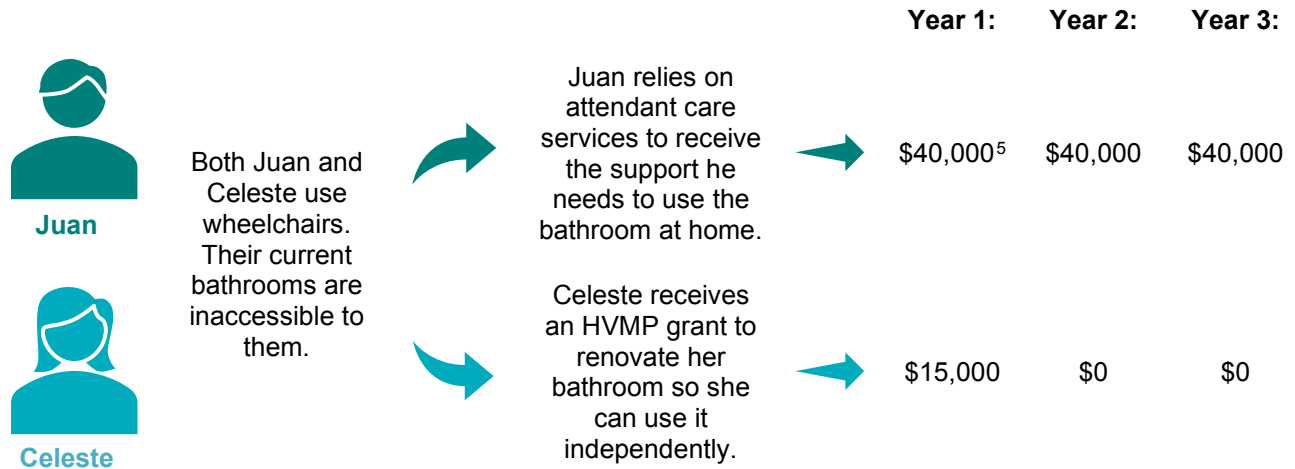
Hospital Bed	Long Term Care	Supportive Housing	Home Modification
\$1500/day	\$700/day	\$250/day	\$41/day <sup>4</sup> (first year of use)

In a snapshot of HVMP applications over just two weeks in October 2021, eleven applicants indicated that a home modification would enable them to avoid moving to a hospital, institution, or long-term care. Of these, five applicants were unfortunately declined due to lack of program funding. **If these five individuals are admitted to long-term care or hospital in the absence of home modifications, this could represent upwards of \$1 million in healthcare system spending in the first year alone.**

More generally, completed modifications also achieved grantees’ goals of improving access to their home (91%), enabling essential activities of daily living (96%) and continuing to manage

<sup>4</sup> Daily cost of home modification calculated based on \$15,000 grant amount divided by 365 days for first year of use; costs would then be assumed to be \$0 per day following first year of use.

their responsibilities (92%). In this way, home modifications can also enable Ontarians to avoid or defer the need for attendant care or personal support worker services in the home. Often, attendant care is needed because an individual’s home is inaccessible to them, resulting in them requiring support in order to perform the basic tasks of daily life. The impact of a home modification on an individual’s need for attendant care can be illustrated via the example scenario below:



Over just three years, a \$15,000 home modification can save approximately \$120,000 in Home and Community Care Services-funded attendant care. While Celeste may still require attendant care at a future date, it has delayed her reliance on support. It is also worth noting that in many situations, a home modification may also be a prerequisite for individuals to receive in-home care, as individuals may be prevented from accessing home care if they do not have an accessible environment.

**Overall, 89% of grantees are highly satisfied with the outcome of their funded**

**modifications**, and often express an increase in feelings of morale and confidence as a result of their modifications.

*“It has allowed us to travel as a family. To get William to his appointments and provide him with the ability to not be stuck at home. Giving him freedom. Without the modification he would be a prisoner in his own home.”*

- Jen Irwin, mother of HVMP grantee  
Belfast, ON

The real, human impact of accessible modifications was recently demonstrated at March of Dimes Canada’s celebration events. First, the Irwin family in Belfast, ON was joined by Hon. Lisa Thompson to unveil a completed HVMP-funded vehicle modification project, which enables 18-year-old William and his family to travel safely. William, who uses a wheelchair, is able to be a full and active participant in his community as a result.

<sup>5</sup> Annual average cost of attendant care services calculated based on \$36.72 hourly rate, at three hours per day of services (the typical amount of services required for an individual requiring support with toileting).

In Nepean, Colleen Mohrram was joined by Hon. Merrilee Fullerton for a virtual celebration of the wheelchair lift that enabled Colleen to return home from hospital. And in Dorchester, MPP Jeff Yurek joined the Carons and the Delaneys, neighbouring families who installed a stairlift and modified their van, respectively. Both families were able to better support and include their teen sons who use wheelchairs thanks to HVMP grants.

Of note, HVMP also provides direct economic benefits to local businesses across the province. Contractors, carpenters, renovators and vehicle modifiers all generate business by receiving the HVMP funding to complete these life-changing projects for individuals and families.

### *Grants vs. Tax Credits*

Unlike the Seniors Home Safety Tax Credit, HVMP is a permanently funded program, open to Ontarians with disabilities of all ages. Further, as a direct granting program, applicants receive funding for their home and/or vehicle modifications upon approval, instead of waiting to file their next tax return. This direct granting format is important for low- to mid-income applicants, who would experience a significant financial barrier if they needed to pay upfront to make their homes safe prior to receiving the benefit. HVMP is an important complement to the tax credit, serving a population that faces additional barriers to staying safe and independent at home.

## Funding Options

Based on conversations with MCCSS and MSAA over the past year about the HVMP's current impact and potential for growth, and on their recommendation, March of Dimes Canada has developed three options to increase funding to the program as part of the Spring 2022 Ontario budget processes:

*“I know this program can impact the lives of many more Ontarians, which is why I will be supporting its growth.”*

- Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

### *Option 1*

A \$50-million annualized investment, including the current transfer, with administrative costs to be determined, scaled up over two-to-three fiscal years, and implementing policy modernization recommendations, would:

- Fully fund all expected eligible HVMP grant applications (~2,900 per year), ramping up over two years.
- Market the HVMP more broadly to increase applications and grants funded.
- Increase grant caps to reflect current home and vehicle modification market costs, approximately \$25,000 for home modifications and \$20,000 for vehicle modifications.
- Permit time to fully review of HVMP program policy guidelines and implement resulting modernizations, including construction counselling, partnership development and allowing flexibility for exceptional cases.
- Permit time to consider the “home” of the HVMP within the provincial government, and ensure the program is housed, led and supervised by the appropriate ministry.

### Option 2

A \$30-million annualized investment, including the current transfer and with administrative costs to be determined, scaled up over two years, would:

- Fully fund all currently expected eligible HVMP grant applications (~2,900 per year), building capacity up to full funding levels in the second year.
- Permit time for March of Dimes Canada and the provincial government to thoroughly review HVMP policy guideline modernization options and develop corresponding implementation plans.
- Permit time to consider the “home” of the HVMP within the provincial government, and ensure the program is housed, led and supervised by the appropriate ministry.

*“Much has changed in the province over the past 20 years, but the resources provided to the organization remain stagnant, while costs increase and needs persist. I am requesting your consideration... for increased funding that will support many more individuals with disabilities in thriving in their own homes and communities.”*

- Jeff Yurek, MPP  
Elgin-Middlesex-London

### Option 3

A \$10.5M annualized investment in addition to the current transfer but including current administrative costs in the 2022-23 fiscal year:

- Funding double the grants at current cap levels, to approximately 1,800 grants per year.
- A commitment to review modernization proposals and consider increasing funding over the following years.
- A commitment to consider the “home” of the HVMP within the provincial government, and ensure the program is housed, led and supervised by the appropriate ministry.

### Policy Modernization Considerations

After over 20 years of delivering the HVMP within existing policy guidelines, March of Dimes Canada has concluded that policy guidelines should be adjusted to reflect both the reality of increased costs of modifications, grantees’ case management needs and the applicant income levels.

1. Since the HVMP was initially implemented, the costs of construction, including labour and materials, have increased along with the cost of living. **Over time, the \$15,000 lifetime cap for home modifications does not yield the same results as when the program was first created.** While a full grant would have resulted in both entrance and bathroom modifications in the early 2000s, that is no longer the case. Applicants are often required to choose which modification is most important, which doesn’t serve the full need, putting pressure on low-income Ontario seniors and people with disabilities to find a way to pay for needed modifications themselves. **The \$15,000 vehicle modification grant cap is similarly outdated.** The full vehicle modification grant has, in the past, resulted in a completely modified vehicle; this is no longer the case. If the applicant is not able to make up the difference between the grant and the cost of the modification, policy guidelines require the application to be refused.
2. Home construction and vehicle modification projects are complex and challenging for most people. For seniors and people with disabilities, this is even more so the case.



Applicants and grantees regularly seek advice from HVMP staff on hiring architects, gathering quotes and managing contractors, or finding a reputable vehicle mechanic who can install the modification required. **However, HVMP policy guidelines prohibit even maintaining a preferred vendors list, and do not allow HVMP staff to warn grantees off contractors who have proven difficult to work with in the past.** Without construction counselling, grantees are left to their own devices to oversee complex projects and may turn to less reputable contractors to complete the work.

March of Dimes Canada believes that modernizing HVMP policy guidelines to increase grant caps and deliver arms-length construction counselling would be of significant added value to the HVMP and grantees. Modernization opens the door to potential partnerships with existing third-party contractor vetting services and referral sources. Most importantly, increasing grant caps would relieve pressure on grantees to supplement HVMP grants with personal funds to meet program timelines and potentially incur debt for already low-income Ontarians with disabilities and seniors.

## Recommendations Explained

### *Recommendation 1*

**That the Ontario provincial government, with leadership from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, increase Home and Vehicle Modification Program funding to a \$50-million annualized investment (including the current transfer) scaled up over a two-to-three year period and with administrative costs to be determined. This investment would make an immediate and escalating impact in ensuring seniors and Ontarians with disabilities can safely return to and/or stay in their own homes and participate meaningfully in their communities.**

*“HVMP grants can divert health care dollars from areas such as long-term care, attendant services and hospital stays.”*

- Faisal Hassan, MPP  
York South-Weston

March of Dimes Canada’s HVMP has been funded by MCCSS and has been exceptionally well-served by this partnership; March of Dimes Canada thanks MCCSS staff for over 20 years of effective oversight and collaborative administration. Hon. Raymond Cho, Minister of Seniors and Accessibility and his staff also have championed the HVMP and March of Dimes Canada more generally and we look forward to working them as a key ministry partner. We thank

Hon. Raymond Cho, Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Hon. Todd Smith, and Hon. Lisa Thompson, their staff, and the Ontario public servants we work with for their continuing support of this program and March of Dimes Canada.

**March of Dimes Canada recommends flowing a \$50-million, annualized investment<sup>6</sup> into the HVMP to scale up operations quickly and deliver direct grants to every eligible Ontarian with a disability who applies for funding for home and/or vehicle modifications. The proposed investment will dramatically increase the number of**

<sup>6</sup> This amount does not include consideration of program administration costs, which are proposed to be negotiated in a renewed TPA with an understanding that March of Dimes Canada has the administrative infrastructure already in place to meet existing funding and program requirements.

**Ontarians receiving grants from approx. 900 to well over 3,000 per year.** This investment is designed to address the full scope of program needs and provides for an increase to grant caps (see Recommendation 2) which ensures the purchasing power of each grant fully addresses the home and/or vehicle modification needs of every eligible applicant.

*“As one of the most disproportionately affected groups during the pandemic, peoples with disabilities deserve our support now more than ever.”*

- Mike Schreiner, MPP, Guelph  
Leader of the Green Party of Ontario

March of Dimes Canada is positioned to scale up the HVMP quickly and effectively, making Ontario a leader in direct funding for these types of modifications. Additional investment in the HVMP will align with provincial government priorities through direct, immediate funding for essential home and vehicle modifications. These modifications allow seniors who face physical barriers to independent living and Ontarians who identify as having a disability to return to or remain in their homes and participate meaningfully in their communities potentially reducing

reliance on more expensive attendant care services – services which are badly needed in other areas of Ontario’s health system at this time. Modifications further promote aging-in-place for Ontario seniors, achieving the dignity and comfort they richly deserve.

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the provincial government, with leadership from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility and in partnership with March of Dimes Canada, undertake a full review of the Home and Vehicle Modification Program with a view to modernizing policy guidelines to ensure the program is flexible and accessible, and that seniors and Ontarians with disabilities receive the full support they need to achieve their goals under the program.** March of Dimes Canada and the MCCSS have collaborated in delivering the HVMP for over 20 years. Most programs undergo reviews to ensure they are continuing to deliver on their goals, and to reflect current needs of those the programs serve. After more than two decades, major shifts have occurred in Ontario’s population and annual inflation has lessened the purchasing power of every dollar. Certainly, the current pandemic has shone new light on the need for people to be able to stay in their homes and engage in their communities in new ways.

**March of Dimes Canada recommends an HVMP program policy guidelines review and renewal, with a view to adjustments which reflect the reality of increased costs of modifications, grantees’ construction counselling needs, and the need for flexibility and accessibility for all applicants.** March of Dimes Canada believes that modernizing HVMP policy guidelines to renew grant caps and deliver arms-length construction counselling would be of significant added value to the HVMP and grantees. Moreover, policy guideline modernization opens the door to potential partnerships with existing third-party contractor vetting services and referral sources.

### *Grant Cap Renewal*

Since the HVMP was initially implemented, the costs of construction, including labour and materials, have increased along with the cost of living. Over time, the \$15,000 lifetime cap for home modifications does not yield the same results as when the program was first created. While a full grant would have resulted in both entrance and bathroom modifications in the early 2000s, that is no longer the case. Applicants are often required to choose which modification is most important, which doesn't serve the full need, putting pressure on low-income Ontario seniors and people with disabilities to find a way to pay for needed modifications themselves. Increasing the home modification grant cap to a lifetime maximum of \$25,000 will ensure eligible applicants receive the full benefit of their needed modifications to return to or remain in their own homes well into the future.

*“I would like to see these amounts increased to better reflect today’s modification costs.”*

- Monique Taylor, MPP  
Hamilton Mountain

The \$15,000 vehicle modification grant cap is similarly outdated. The full vehicle modification grant has, in the past, resulted in a completely modified vehicle; this is no longer the case. Increasing the vehicle modification grant cap to \$20,000 will deliver on the promise of the program and meet applicants’ needs for a fully modified vehicle.

Currently, if the applicant is not able to make up the difference between the grant and the cost of the modification, policy guidelines require the application to be refused. Increasing grant caps would relieve pressure on grantees to supplement HVMP grants with personal funds to meet program timelines and potentially incur debt for already low-income Ontarians with disabilities and seniors.

## Further Action

March of Dimes Canada is looking forward to continuing discussions and potential expansion of the partnership with the government of Ontario in building a modernized, flexible HVMP which truly meets the needs of Ontarians with disabilities and seniors.

*“I recently had the opportunity to speak with Lori, whose parents Salvatore and Vincenza live in my riding and received an HVMP grant to install a stairlift and renovate their bathroom... Salvatore has Parkinson’s and greatly appreciated the modifications, which allow him to live at home instead of being prematurely institutionalized.*

- Dr. Jill Andrew, MPP  
Toronto-St. Paul’s

**As part of this commitment to collaboration, March of Dimes Canada is prepared to partner with MCCSS, MSAA, and other relevant ministries and offices to continue to implement a Communications Plan** which envisions celebratory ministerial/Premier’s launch events and media availabilities, local events with MPPs focusing on HVMP success stories, and the creation of communications resources and materials for MPPs’ constituency offices and other referral sources across the province.

As noted above, this work has already been undertaken with successful project celebrations in local ridings with Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Hon. Lisa

Thompson, and MPP Jeff Yurek. As well, more than a dozen other MPPs and party leaders have participated in meetings with grantees in their constituencies to learn about the HVMP's impact. Many have since voiced their support for program expansion and enhancement in letters to Ministers Fullerton, Cho and Bethlenfalvy. MPPs and party leaders who have met with HVMP grantees include:

- Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
- Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
- Steven Del Duca, Leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario
- MPP Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario
- MPP Jill Andrew, Toronto—St. Paul's
- MPP Stephen Blais, Orléans
- MPP France Gélinas, Nickel Belt
- MPP Faisal Hassan, York South—Weston
- MPP Tom Rakocevic, Humber River—Black Creek
- MPP Michael Parsa, Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill
- MPP Monique Taylor, Hamilton Mountain
- MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos, Oakville-North Burlington
- MPP Jamie West, Subsbury
- MPP Kathleen Wynne, Don Valley West

## Part 2: Supporting Stroke Survivors to Navigate the Path Forward After a Stroke

### Background

More than 21,000 people in Ontario experience a stroke each year. With advancements in medical care, the survival rate for stroke has increased dramatically, and more people are surviving stroke than ever before. However, as more people survive a stroke, stroke has become one of the leading causes of adult disability in Canada.

Today, more than 405,000 Canadians live with the wide-ranging, disabling effects of stroke. This number grows every year and is expected to double by 2040. Nearly two-thirds of stroke survivors leave hospital with a disability, such as aphasia and communication challenges or debilitating fatigue. Stroke impacts every aspect of a person's life, from physical health to mental health, family life, financial, and social and community participation.

As a response to the increasing needs of stroke survivors, March of Dimes Canada's **After Stroke** program was created in collaboration with stroke experts and people with lived experience of stroke to directly fill the gap. Using industry best-practices and evidence-based design, the **After Stroke** program provides world-class stroke support and is based on Stroke Best Practice Recommendations. This support centres on March of Dimes Canada's **After Stroke Coordinators**, who serve and support stroke survivors as system navigators at a time when the health and rehabilitation systems are new and overwhelming to survivors and their

families and caregivers. Our **After Stroke Coordinators** fill the gap by giving stroke survivors and their families a seamless transition from hospital to home and community.

**After Stroke** puts stroke survivors and their families at the centre of care, helping them live their best lives after stroke and connecting them to community supports through in-hospital support, coordination and community navigation, personalized planning and goal-setting, stroke-focused education and training, and peer support. To promote consistency and fill gaps across the board, **After Stroke** was enhanced and relaunched in regions across Ontario in 2021.

### Seeking Ontario Health Team Partnerships

With the goal of closing gaps for stroke survivors across the province, March of Dimes Canada is beginning to explore opportunities for Ontario Health Team partnership for **After Stroke** system navigators in regions across the province. An essential community program for stroke survivors and their families and caregivers, the **After Stroke** program can, with OHT funding, be a sustainable and long-term support for the growing population of stroke survivors in Ontario. In partnership with the Northern Independent Living Agencies, March of Dimes Canada has been funded by Ontario Health North (previously North East LHIN) to provide post-stroke services in Sault Ste Marie and Timmins since 2014. In Waterloo-Wellington, the Local Health Integrated Network has recognized the importance of peer-to-peer support by funding the Hospital Visitation Program of **After Stroke**, through Grand River Hospital and March of Dimes Canada since 2010. This is the first phase of **After Stroke**, connecting stroke survivors to volunteer peers. March of Dimes Canada will continue to build these relationships and partnerships with Ontario Health Teams to support the growth of the **After Stroke** program.

## Part 3: Investing in the Home and Community Care Sector

As detailed above, **Ontarians have expressed that they want to receive care in their own homes and communities**. An important piece of the puzzle is home and community care services. Like home and vehicle modifications, **receiving care in one's own home and community improves quality of life, and prevents unnecessary hospitalizations, emergency room visits and premature institutionalization**. The home and community care sector delivers services to enable people to live well at home and in their community.

As a major provider of community support services for Ontarians with disabilities, March of Dimes Canada has seen firsthand the impact of inadequate funding for the home and community support sector – from underutilization, to system strain, to staffing shortages. For this reason, we support the Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA)'s 2022 Pre-Budget Submission on investment in the sector.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ontario Community Support Association, 2022, 7 Reasons to Care: Why we need to invest in Ontario's Home and Community Care Sector to safeguard the future sustainability of our health system.