



## SENIORS

The McGuinty government is working hard to ensure Ontario seniors enjoy a high quality of life by providing health care and support in ways that best meet their needs.

### **2010 Ontario Budget**

Ontarians pay more for generic drugs than those in other countries.

The government will propose reforms to Ontario's drug system to facilitate lower generic drug prices.

### **Recent Achievements**

#### ***Ontario's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth***

Seniors and other Ontarians will benefit from tax relief totalling \$11.8 billion over three years being provided to people by permanently cutting Personal Income Tax (PIT), enhancing ongoing sales tax and property tax relief, and providing direct payments to help Ontarians adjust to the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).

#### ***Ontario Senior Homeowners' Property Tax Grant***

Eligible senior homeowners will continue to receive additional assistance with their property taxes through the Ontario Senior Homeowners' Property Tax Grant, which started in 2009. The maximum grant was doubled to \$500 in 2010, as announced in the 2008 Budget.

The government is providing \$1 billion over the next five years through this grant, to more than 600,000 seniors with low-to-middle incomes who own their homes.

#### ***Increasing Access to Locked-in Accounts***

The government introduced reforms to the rules for locked-in accounts to give seniors and other Ontarians more flexibility in accessing the funds in these accounts:

- Increased unlocking from Ontario life income funds to 50 per cent from 25 per cent, effective January 1, 2010
- Provided a two-year waiver of fees for financial-hardship unlocking applications, effective April 1, 2009.

## ***Pensions and Retirement Income Security***

Ontario is playing a leading role in a national effort to review the state of the current retirement income system, its future sustainability and options that could strengthen it for tomorrow's seniors. The government is also in the midst of reforms to modernize the Pension Benefits Act. Reforms that began in 2009 will continue in 2010 as the government considers recommendations from the report of the Expert Commission on Pensions.

Pension reform and the broader issue of retirement income adequacy are key priorities for the McGuinty government.

The severe downturn in world equity markets in 2008 and low long-term interest rates have adversely affected the retirement savings of Canadians. These events have focused attention on the state of Canada's retirement income system.

Ontario has called for a national pension summit in 2010 to encourage a pan-Canadian discussion on retirement income, a call that has been endorsed by all other provinces.

## ***Improving Home Care Services***

The government will strengthen the accountability of home care services among service providers and Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) throughout the province and introduce new quality measures that will strengthen the way CCACs make arrangements for home care services.

The McGuinty government has expanded home care services to about 500,000 Ontarians annually.

## ***Achievements Since 2003***

Since 2003 the McGuinty government has introduced a number of key initiatives designed to improve the lives of Ontario seniors:

### ***Tax Relief***

- More than \$100 million per year in additional tax relief to over 700,000 senior families and individuals from 2007 to 2009, because of enhancements to the Ontario Property and Sales Tax Credits since 2003
- Over half a billion dollars in Ontario personal income tax savings from 2007 to 2009 for pensioner couples with eligible pension income, as a result of allowing pension splitting. In 2010, as many as 580,000 pensioner couples could benefit from pension income splitting.

### ***Aging at Home Strategy***

In 2007, the McGuinty government launched the four-year, \$1.1 billion Aging at Home Strategy. The strategy is designed to provide support to seniors and their caregivers to help seniors stay healthy and live with dignity and independence in the comfort of their own homes.

### ***Long-Term Care Homes***

The McGuinty government has also taken important steps to ensure seniors who cannot live at home enjoy access to the highest quality long-term care services. These include making key investments in long-term care homes and increasing front-line staff. Other achievements include:

- Adding more than 8,200 new beds in long-term care homes since 2003
- Increasing long-term care funding by over \$1 billion since 2003
- Funding more than 6,100 new front-line staff in long-term care homes, including 2,300 nurses
- In 2009, through the Ontario Health Quality Council, the government publicly reported for the first time on quality of care in long-term care homes, in the form of resident health outcomes and satisfaction.