

January 22, 2024

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON, M7A 2J3

Re: Preparing for Ontario's Aging Population

Dear Minister Jones,

I am pleased to write to you for the first time as the new President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I look forward to working with you on issues important to public health and Ontario's economy and society. My letter today is about one of those critical issues.

As outlined in our [previous letter](#), Ontario's aging population has implications for its workforce, health care system, productivity, infrastructure, business succession, and economic growth. There are currently just under 300,000 Ontarians living with dementia—a figure that will grow by 100,000 before the end of this decade and triple by 2050 as our population ages and lives longer. Forthcoming disease-modifying treatments for Alzheimer's disease promise to be a revolutionary tool in our fight against dementia, as these treatments could drastically reduce the number of Ontarians who progress to late-stage Alzheimer's disease.

Canada's first-ever disease-modifying treatment for Alzheimer's disease is expected to be approved in early 2024 and available to patients by early 2025. However, **Ontario does not currently have the critical healthcare infrastructure in place to implement emerging treatments.** A lack of preparedness will lead to tremendous and avoidable strain on individuals living with dementia, their caregivers, our health and long-term care systems, and the broader economy, significantly impacting quality of life while costing taxpayers [billions of dollars](#).

In order to be effective, forthcoming disease-modifying treatments must be administered early, at the mild cognitive impairment or early Alzheimer's disease stage. However, currently, very few Ontarians receive a confirmed diagnosis at all, and yet fewer receive one at the earlier stages of the disease. To implement these emerging treatments, Ontarians will need access to timely, reliable detection and diagnosis, in addition to regular infusion sessions and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans.

In alignment with the [Ontario Dementia Care Alliance](#), I am writing on behalf of the OCC and our [Health Policy Council](#) to call on your government to **prioritize preparedness for the arrival of disease-modifying treatments for Alzheimer's disease to realize the associated cost savings and improved health outcomes** by taking the following actions:

1. Define Alzheimer's disease and dementia as a public health priority, with a focus on early detection and support for those living with dementia and their caregivers.
2. Ensure that all Ontarians living with or at risk for dementia have access to timely, team-based primary and specialist care to facilitate proactive assessment and early diagnosis.

3. Invest in critical health care infrastructure, including capacity for diagnosis, infusion, and MRI scans.
4. Explore opportunities to provide coverage under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) for positron emission tomography (PET) scans and, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) analysis and corresponding lumbar punctures for the purpose of diagnosing mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease.
5. Make adequate, predictable, and sustainable investments toward innovative home and community care models to reduce reliance on costly, institutional-based care settings.
6. Collaborate with the federal government to ensure equitable access to disease-modifying treatments across the country.

Ontario has months, not years, to prepare for the arrival of our first-ever approved disease-modifying treatments for Alzheimer's disease. It is imperative we get this right to avoid additional, undue strain on our already vulnerable health and long-term care systems and unnecessary suffering for Ontarians living with dementia, their care partners, and their families.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further and look forward to continuing to work with you on solutions that support the health of Ontarians and our economy.

Sincerely,



Daniel Tisch, APR, FCPRS, ICD.D
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce