

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT ENHANCING PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES FOR HIGHEST-NEED ONTARIANS

Coverage Expanded For Long-Term Care Residents And Northern And Rural Communities

TORONTO – The Ontario government is changing OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services to improve access for people who need them most, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Previously, some of Ontario’s most high-need patients were left without physiotherapy services,” said Smitherman. “We’re improving our physiotherapy program so that the dollars we spend help those who need it most — seniors, children, people with disabilities and people needing service in their home and after they leave the hospital.”

As of April 1, 2005, government-funded physiotherapy services will be available to:

- All seniors 65 and over
- All people aged 19 and under
- Long-Term Care residents of all ages
- People of all ages needing short-term physiotherapy in their home and through a Community Care Access Centre
- People of all ages requiring physiotherapy after overnight hospitalization
- People of all ages receiving physiotherapy who are recipients of Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, Family Benefits and Workplace Safety Insurance Board.

Prior to April 1, only 71 per cent of long-term care homes were served by designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics. Most communities in northern Ontario also didn’t have access to these clinics. Over the next few months, the government will expand physiotherapy services for long-term care residents and for people living in rural and northern communities needing services in-home or after being in hospital.

"We are pleased that the government has made this step towards improved access to needed physiotherapy service," said Christina Boyle, President, Ontario Physiotherapy Association.

"Today's announcement recognizes the importance of physiotherapy to the health and well-being of residents in long term care homes," said Karen Sullivan, Executive Director of the Ontario Long Term Care Association. "We welcome the opportunity to work with government to ensure that residents in all homes who need this service can get it."

"We welcome this decision, and we look forward to working with government to ensure that these individuals have equal access to the level of physiotherapy they need, regardless of where they live in the province," said Gail Carlin, Chair of the Board of Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors.

“This program change is good news for long-term care residents who are trying to regain their movement after a fall or an accident,” said Lois Dent, President of Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Long-Term Care Facilities. “We are pleased that all residents will have the same standard of physiotherapy services whether they live in the far north or in a major city.”

Ontarians aged 20 to 64 are no longer eligible for OHIP coverage for physiotherapy unless they require these services following overnight hospitalization, in their homes or if they live in a long-term care home. Ontarians with private insurance should check to see if their plan includes coverage for physiotherapy.

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