



# The Role of Assistive Devices in Helping Ontario Seniors Age at Home

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The StrategyCorp Institute of Public Policy and Economy provides thought leadership on important public policy issues facing Canadians and their governments across the country by combining economic and policy expertise with key political insights.



Ontario Home Medical Equipment Providers Association (OHMEPA) commissioned the StrategyCorp Institute to produce an independent research report on the role of assistive devices in helping Ontario seniors age at home. For questions specifically regarding this document, please contact the author listed above. Additional information about OHMEPA is provided in Appendix A.

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# Executive Summary

Ontario senior care is at an inflection point. More than 43,000 people are waiting for a long-term care (LTC) bed (Ontario Long Term Care Home Association, 2024). As the number of seniors and pressure on the LTC system continues to rise, even the large investments announced by the Government of Ontario will not suffice to meet demand. A comprehensive approach to preserve the capacity of long-term care and hospitals is needed. Enabling more seniors to live at home longer is a crucial piece of the puzzle.

Assistive devices are foundational to help seniors maintain their functional abilities and age at home. Assistive equipment includes a wide array of products and technologies related, for instance, to mobility, hearing and communication. Their benefits are well-documented in the scientific literature. By preserving independence, they make a positive impact on seniors' and caregivers' wellbeing and quality of life. The right combination of equipment substantially improves mobility by allowing older adults to safely move around their homes and communities. Assistive devices, and particularly mobility equipment, greatly reduce the risk of injuries and falls. This in turn results in fewer hospital and LTC admissions as injuries can have devastating and sometimes permanent health impacts on seniors.

The Assistive Devices Program (ADP) is the main program through which seniors and other Ontarians living with physical disabilities receive financial support to purchase assistive devices. In 2021-2022, ADP funded over 150,000 mobility products (i.e., wheelchairs, ambulation aids, scooters and seating equipment). The program relies on the collaboration with healthcare professionals (e.g., physicians, occupational and physical therapists) and the assistive devices sector (e.g., manufacturers, distributors and vendors).

ADP faces important limitations that have been identified by different stakeholders. With the right updates, the program could improve its ability to support ageing at home. **To account for the rising costs associated with providing assistive devices to seniors, the Government of Ontario should consider adjusting the approved prices for ADP-funded devices.**

ADP does not currently fund devices that make seniors' homes safer and more accessible. **Expanding ADP coverage to include accessibility equipment would make these products more affordable and stimulate adoption by seniors and their caregivers.**

To complement ADP, the government should build on existing and/or previous tax credits to facilitate access to assistive devices. In this regard, **the province should develop an enhanced refundable tax credit to help seniors and their caregivers purchase equipment and make the home alterations they need to age at home.**

Not addressing the limitations currently hindering access to the full suite of assistive equipment seniors need will have negative health and wellbeing consequences for Ontario seniors. It will also lead to higher healthcare costs for the province due to early or unnecessary LTC admission or hospital visits. At a time when demand for LTC beds already exceeds supply and things are expected to get worse, the Government of Ontario should work in close collaboration with the assistive devices industry to improve ADP and facilitate access to the essential equipment seniors need to stay in their homes longer.

# Introduction



The number of people aged 65 years and older in Ontario increased by 17.1 per cent between 2016 and 2021 to reach 2,637,710. This age cohort now represents 18.5 per cent of the province's population (Statistics Canada 2017, 2023a).

According to the Ontario Ministry of Finance demographic projections, this proportion will grow to 20.3 per cent by 2046. This means 4,393,898 Ontarians will be 65 years and older by then, a 66.6 per cent increase from 2021. Of this number, 1,778,810 will be 80 years and over (Government of Ontario, 2023d). By comparison, the 2021 census recorded 663,730 people in this age group in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

As the number of seniors grows in Ontario, the demand for healthcare and long-term care increases. The province currently has a little under 80,000 long-term care (LTC) beds (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2021). LTC homes are already at full capacity as demand is outpacing supply.

According to the Ontario Long Term Care Home Association (OLTCA), more than 43,000 individuals are currently waiting for an LTC bed in the province. In 2022-2023, the median wait time to move into an LTC home increased to 201 days (nearly seven months) for a senior in the community. By comparison, the median wait time was 159 days in 2019-2020. The situation will only get worse as the waitlist is expected to reach 48,000 by 2029 (Ontario Long Term Care Home Association, 2024; Health Quality Ontario, 2023a).

The Ontario government committed to investing a total of \$6.4 billion to build 30,000 net new LTC beds by 2028 and upgrade 28,000 existing ones (Government of Ontario, 2023a). Taken together, the price tag comes to \$110,344 per bed (appreciating that new beds are of course more expensive than upgraded ones).

However, the OLTC data shows this large investment will not suffice to meet demand in Ontario. At a minimum, there will be a shortfall of 18,000 beds in 2029 (i.e., 48,000 people on the wait list minus 30,000 new beds). More LTC beds will not address the pressure on the system.

The provincial government must consider additional avenues to reduce demand for LTC. Assistive devices are an essential piece of this puzzle. Equipment like mobility devices is instrumental in preserving seniors' independence and keeping them in the community. Public investments to support seniors' access to assistive devices can help them age at home, thus alleviating capacity and financial pressure on the care system in Ontario.

This report illustrates the benefits of assistive devices as demonstrated in the scientific literature. We look at seniors' access to assistive devices in Ontario and highlight existing limitations of the key government program older adults rely on to afford the equipment they need.

## WHAT ARE "ASSISTIVE DEVICES"?

Assistive devices help people with disabilities maintain and/or improve their functioning, independence and well-being. Assistive devices include a wide array of products and technologies related to mobility, hearing and communication, vision, prostheses, orthotics, respiration, diabetes and other disabilities.

Depending on the need, some assistive devices are available "off-the-shelf" while others require personalized adjustments from a professional (usually a vendor). In some cases, individuals may need customized devices specifically designed and manufactured for them.

This report focuses primarily on mobility devices that enable Ontarians with disabilities to move around their homes and communities. These devices include walkers, rollators, wheelchairs, power chairs and scooters.



## Section 1

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# The Benefits of Assistive Devices



# The Benefits of Assistive Devices

According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), 40.4 per cent of Canadian seniors aged 65 years and older were living with a disability. This was up from 37.8 per cent since the last CSD in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2023b). According to the latest numbers available, 870,360 Ontario seniors (65 and over) lived with a disability in 2017. This represented 43.1 per cent of people in this age cohort (Statistics Canada, 2023c).

Assistive devices are instrumental in helping seniors with disabilities. Looking at people with physical disabilities specifically, the 2017 CSD found that Canadians 65 years and over “were the most likely to use at least one type of aid or assistive device within their home (55.3% of men, 69.6% of women)” (Choi, 2021).

Assistive devices make a significant positive impact on the well-being and the quality of life of seniors. The right equipment substantially improves mobility by enabling older adults to safely move around their homes. It helps them access social and healthcare services in the community (e.g., medical clinics and day programs) as well as family and friends. This facilitates social interactions, community participation and societal inclusion (Wang & Wilson, 2022).

The independence gains associated with assistive devices are well-documented in scientific articles. Using data from the University of Michigan Health and Retirement Study, Su and Mejia (2020) looked at the benefits of assistive devices for seniors with impaired lower limb mobility. They found that older adults who use devices had greater self-efficacy compared to non-users (Su & Mejia, 2020). Wilson et al. (2009) analysed the benefits of equipment and home modifications to seniors aging with a disability. Their research highlighted that people who had received devices and the necessary

home modifications experienced a slower functional decline over the two years of the study. The equipment also allowed them to maintain independence (Wilson et al., 2009).



Slowing the functional decline of seniors plays a crucial role in delaying hospital and LTC admission. Mobility equipment greatly reduces the risk of injuries that can have devastating and sometimes permanent impacts on the functional abilities of older adults. Falls are a major cause of injuries and emergency room visits. Several articles and literature reviews have found that assistive devices and home modifications greatly reduce the risks of falls among seniors (MacLachlan et al., 2018, Snell et al., 2012). A 2012 paper from the London School of Economics and Political Science looked at several studies and noted that “adults lacking necessary adaptations were between 1.5 and 2.8 times more likely to suffer a fall than those where interventions [equipment and adaptations] were in place” (Snell et al., 2012, p. 4).

Additionally, there is extensive evidence in the literature that assistive devices have significant benefits for informal caregivers (e.g., spouse, family members and friends). Equipment reduces their workload (or what some articles call the “caregiving burden”) and the risk of injuries (Anderson & Wiener, 2015; Madara Marasinghe, 2016; Mortenson et al., 2013). This is particularly important in cases where the main caregiver is another senior such as a spouse.

Assistive devices have mental health benefits and alleviate caregivers’ stress. Health Quality Ontario found in 2021-2022 that 42.2 per cent of “home care patients had a primary family or friend caregiver who experienced distress, anger or depression in relation to their caregiving role or was unable to continue their caregiving activities” (Health Quality Ontario, 2023b). Sometimes, psychological distress and/or injuries will unfortunately prevent primary informal caregivers from providing help to seniors. If no one can take over caregiving responsibilities, these seniors might be forced to leave their homes and be admitted to an LTC facility. For caregivers, distress and injuries can also prevent them from being able to work.



## 1.1. Role of Assistive Devices in Enabling Aging at Home

Physical and cognitive impairment, the inability to move independently and chronic diseases are common reasons why seniors move to LTC homes. Assistive devices play an important role in helping seniors maintain independence and manage health conditions on their own and/or with informal caregivers at home. In many cases, the right combination of equipment and support can enable seniors to safely stay in their homes longer. Different types of devices are often necessary to achieve this outcome. Mobility equipment such as walkers, rollators and wheelchairs are foundational, but they need to be complemented by other aids such as accessibility devices.

Increasing the ability of seniors to age at home by ensuring they have access to assistive devices can have notable benefits for the healthcare system. It can decrease injury-related visits for emergency rooms and lower demand for alternate level of care (ALC) and LTC beds.

A 2017 World Health Organization (WHO) report argued that assistive devices can enable seniors “to continue to live at home and can delay or prevent the need for long-term care” (World Health Organization, 2017, p. 3.).

According to data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), 8,835 individuals lived at home before being admitted into LTC facilities in Ontario in 2022-2023. Three-quarters of them did not receive home care at the time of admission (Canadian Institute for Health Information 2023). Home accessibility is an important factor that forces some seniors to prematurely seek LTC admission. Assistive and accessibility devices help alleviate this barrier.

Ultimately, assistive devices can contribute to preserving the capacity of long-term care and hospitals in Ontario at a crucial time where the system is stretched and demand steadily increases as the population ages. The 2017 WHO report noted that assistive devices can reduce direct health and welfare costs associated with for instance hospital admissions (World Health Organization, 2017). Similarly, increasing the number of seniors who age at home can result in important LTC-related cost savings for the government.



Section 2

How Seniors Access  
Assistive Devices

# How Seniors Access Assistive Devices

The Government of Ontario has programs and tax measures in place to help seniors afford assistive equipment. The Ontario Seniors Care at Home Tax Credit (OSCHTC) covers selected medical expenses, including some assistive devices (e.g., mobility and hearing aids), bathroom aids (e.g., grab bars) and some renovations to improve mobility, access or functioning.

The Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit (SHSTC) applied to renovation expenses to improve safety and accessibility. It was a temporary measure only available for the 2021 and 2022 tax years (Government of Ontario, 2023c, 2024).

Both tax credits are refundable and allow individuals to claim up to 25 per cent of eligible expenses, up to \$1,500 per year for the OSCHTC and \$2,500 for the SHSTC.

However, tax credits can only be claimed once during tax season. This can make it difficult for low-income seniors who cannot afford to pay upfront for the equipment they need and then wait to receive the tax credit months later. Moreover, the buyer is still responsible for at least 75 per cent of the cost. The Ontario Assistive Devices Program administered by the Ministry of Health takes a different approach to help individuals living with disabilities.

## 2.1. Assistive Devices Program

The Assistive Devices Program (ADP) is available to Ontarians of all ages, including seniors, who are living with physical disabilities. ADP covers 75 per cent of the cost of eligible devices and equipment, which means the client only pays the remaining 25 per cent. The program includes more than 8,000 different pieces of equipment, supplies and aids that can be grouped into 11 types:

- **Mobility aids**
- **Hearing aids and other devices**
- **Communication aids**
- **Visual aids**
- **Diabetic equipment and supplies**
- **Respiratory equipment and supplies**
- **Home oxygen therapy**
- **Artificial eyes and facial prosthetics**
- **Custom orthotic braces, compression garments and lymphedema pumps**
- **Prosthetic breasts or limbs**
- **Enteral-feeding pumps and ostomy supplies (Government of Ontario, 2022).**

For each device, ADP sets a maximum approved price in product manuals. ADP pays vendors (also referred to in this paper as “equipment providers”) directly for a piece of eligible equipment.

Based on the latest data provided by ADP, the program funded 156,546 mobility products (i.e., wheelchairs, ambulation aids, scooters and seating equipment) in 2021-2022. Total ADP funding for mobility in 2021-2022 was a little over \$100 million (\$100,989,536). Half of the funding went towards manual and power wheelchairs.

## ONTARIO'S ASSISTIVE DEVICES SECTOR

Ontario has a dynamic assistive devices industry that services hundreds of thousands of clients of all ages.

There are a little over 20 firms that manufacture this type of equipment in the province. Additionally, Ontario is home to approximately 20 distribution offices of Canadian and multinational companies.

Looking at ADP mobility devices specifically, there are 384 distinct vendor locations in Ontario (based on individual addresses). Most vendors in Ontario offer several types of mobility equipment (ambulation aid, power and manual wheelchairs, seating).

They help clients across the entire province in both large and small communities. Of the 384 vendor locations, 318 (82.8 per cent) are situated outside the cities of Toronto and Ottawa (author's calculations based on Government of Ontario, 2023e).

While the industry provides a wide array of assistive devices that greatly improve the life of kids, adults and seniors across the province, this report focuses on the mobility equipment used by Ontario seniors to age at home.

### HOW DIFFERENT PLAYERS COLLABORATE TO DELIVER ADP MOBILITY DEVICES TO SENIORS

Ontario seniors benefit every day from the collaboration between manufacturers, vendors, healthcare professionals and families in the context of ADP.

Manufacturers are at the beginning of the supply chain. They design and produce mobility devices. For their equipment to be eligible for ADP, manufacturers must have their products tested by the Government of Ontario. If approved by the government, the mobility device gets wholesaled to vendors either directly or through a distribution office. Manufacturers negotiate prices and payment terms directly with vendors.

There are several entry points into ADP for Ontario senior (referred to here as "the client"). A senior might be introduced to ADP by their physician (either a family doctor or in a hospital setting) or their pharmacist who would recommend contacting a Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS) organization to book an assessment with an authorizer. Traditionally, the authorizer is a certified occupational or physical therapist ("OT" or "PT"). For some seniors, the authorizer might be the first point of entry into ADP. This can occur if, for instance, the client already receives home care services.

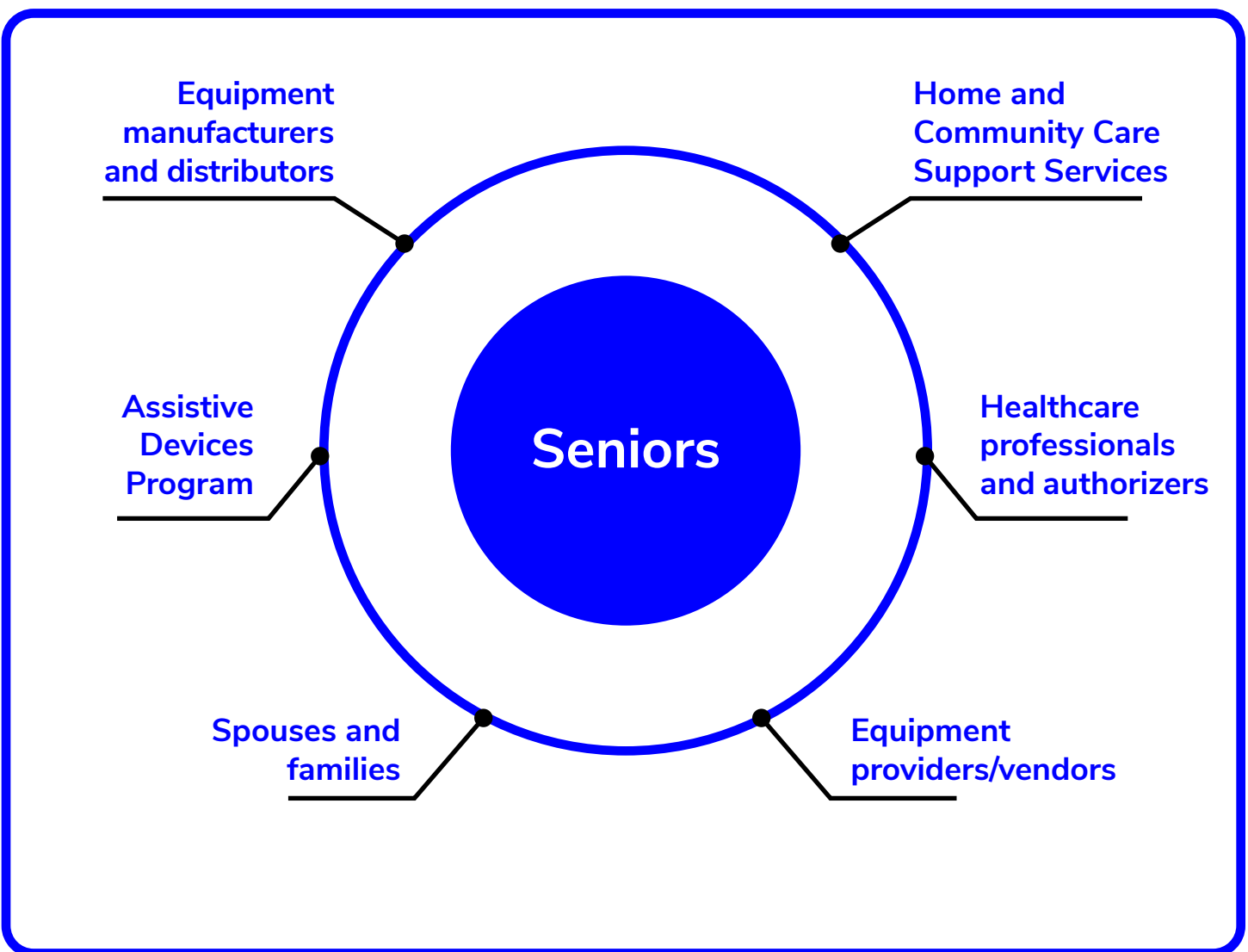
In rare instances, a senior and/or their family might directly contact an equipment provider to get a mobility device. The vendor would refer them to an HCCSS organization. Depending on the priority level assigned to the client, seniors might have to wait up to three months to have their assessment through an HCCSS organization.

During the initial assessment meeting, the authorizer evaluates the client's limitations, needs and ADP eligibility. The measurements of the client are usually taken as they are often needed to inform equipment selection and fitting. In some cases, a vendor may join the first meeting to support the authorizer and help determine the type of assistive device(s) needed. They may also work together to conduct an environmental scan of the living environment to make sure the equipment selected is appropriate (for instance, they must make sure a wheelchair will fit through door frames).

Under ADP, a vendor is required to educate clients about their options under the program. Once the right mobility device has been determined, the authorizer prepares an equipment prescription for the client and the vendor.

Upon receiving the prescription, the equipment provider develops a quote based on what ADP is expected to cover. Depending on the equipment and availability, the prescribed device will come from the vendor's existing inventory or be ordered from a manufacturer. The latter can take more time depending on supply chains.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Players Involved in Delivering ADP to Ontario Seniors**



A trial period usually follows. At this stage, the device is prepared and fitted by the vendor based on the measurements previously taken by the authorizer. The mobility equipment is brought to the client's residence or tested at the vendor's location. The equipment provider explains to the client, the family and any other caregivers how the device works to ensure it is used properly and safely. The duration of the trial varies extensively depending on the vendor, ranging from one visit to as long as a month. The equipment might get damaged during the trial (e.g., if the client has incontinence problems, a wheelchair cushion might get soiled), which forces the vendor to write it off and absorb the cost.

If the trial is not successful, the vendor takes the mobility device back and determines another option in collaboration with the authorizer. A new trial would then ensue.

Once the trial process is successfully completed, the authorizer fills out the required ADP forms and gets the client's signature. It is incumbent on the vendor to submit the ADP paperwork electronically to the Ontario Ministry of Health. ADP then reviews the application and either approves or denies it. Assuming the application is approved, ADP reimburses the vendor who then collects from the client the difference between the cost of the device and what ADP covered.





In most cases, it is at the payment stage that the final equipment gets delivered to the client and fitted (some may sometimes keep the trialed equipment if they paid the expected ADP portion upfront). Often, additional follow-up vendor visits may be required to adjust the assistive device and ensure the client is perfectly satisfied. Figure 2 provides an overview of the steps and overall process discussed in this section. Based on data collected from equipment providers, the overall process to fit and dispense an ADP wheelchair requires on average between eight and ten person-hours. This means vendors spent between 192,320 and 240,400 person-hours delivering a total of 24,040 manual, power and pediatric ADP wheelchairs to Ontario clients in 2021-2022.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Process for a Senior to Obtain an ADP Mobility Device**



Lastly, vendors must keep records and proofs of delivery and payment as well as invoices from the manufacturer because ADP may conduct audits going back several years. In some instances, ADP may claw back payments it previously made to vendors for certain devices it deems ineligible after the fact. The administrative burden and the complexity of the auditing process create uncertainty and costs for assistive devices providers.

**THE ASSISTIVE DEVICES SECTOR SUPPORTS ONTARIO LONG-TERM CARE HOMES**

Vendors play an instrumental role in providing a wide range of assistive devices to long-term care homes across Ontario. The equipment is used by both residents and LTC staff. As an example, a senior might need a mobility device to move around the premises. An employee might use a medical lift to move residents from their chairs to their beds.

The role of equipment providers goes well beyond just selling assistive devices. They deliver and install the equipment on-site. Subsequent visits are often needed to adjust and service the devices. Vendors will train residents and LTC employees and provide guidance related to safe patient handling, seating and positioning. In addition to contributing to residents' comfort and safety, assistive devices also facilitate certain tasks for LTC staff, thus reducing workplace injuries.



Section 3

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Factors Hindering  
Seniors' Access to  
Assistive Devices

# Factors Hindering Seniors' Access to Assistive Devices

Many Ontario seniors encounter barriers accessing the equipment they need to live a better life and age at home. Cost is the most important factor limiting access for both seniors and non-seniors. In a report published in 2018, Statistics Canada found that “among persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 1.5 million had an unmet need for an aid or device. Of these, 1 million indicated that cost was the reason for their unmet need” (Morris et al., 2018).



Another barrier to consider is a lack of awareness. Seniors, their families and other caregivers sometimes do not realize the breadth of assistive and accessibility devices available to help people manage a wide spectrum of functional limitations and medical conditions at home. Technology further increases the capabilities of today's assistive equipment. In this regard, vendors play an important role in educating clients about the different options available to them. In some cases, it is important to note that some seniors may simply refuse to buy and use assistive devices because they think they do not need it or do not want to be perceived as frail.

## 3.1. Limitations of ADP

While ADP helps Ontarians living with disabilities afford assistive devices, the program has limitations that have been highlighted by multiple stakeholders over the years. As the previous section noted, long delays are one of the challenges facing ADP clients. Getting an initial assessment with an authorizer can take several months. This can delay the start of the ADP process, thus preventing clients from getting the equipment they need.

The 2023 Pre-Budget Consultation report of the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs highlighted that several organizations are calling on the government to improve ADP and, particularly, its coverage and funding levels. For instance, Easter Seals Ontario, which provides financial support and services for children with physical disabilities, recommended increasing funding and expanding the list of eligible accessibility equipment for children (Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, 2023, p.13-14). Similarly, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCIO) argued in a 2021 paper that ADP should be expanded to cover floor and ceiling lifts. SCIO noted that British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec all cover lifts (Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, 2021). The rest of this section expands on two key limitations of ADP: approved price levels and scope.

### APPROVED PRICE LEVELS

Vendors' operational costs to provide assistive devices to Ontario seniors have increased significantly over the years. Wages, rent and transportation represent the three largest cost categories for equipment providers. The average hourly wage rate in Ontario grew from \$25.07 in 2013 to \$34.63 in 2023 (in current dollars). This represents a 38.1 per cent increase over a decade (Statistics Canada, 2024a).

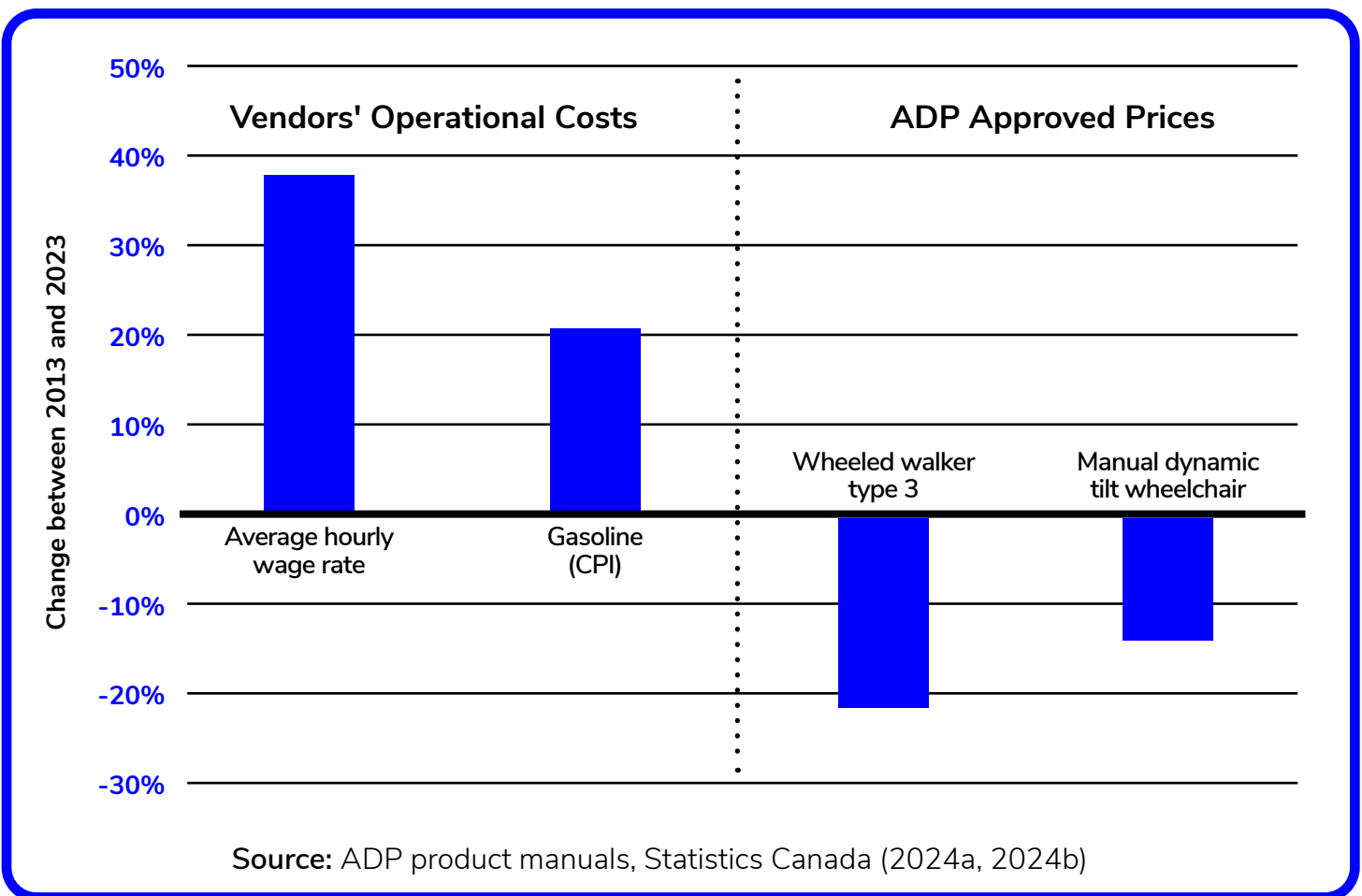
Many vendors spend a lot of time on the road to meet, deliver equipment and assist clients at their homes. Transportation costs are in this regard considerable. In addition to fleet vehicles being more expensive to purchase, gas prices have gone up tremendously. Based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), gasoline prices in Ontario increased by 20.8 per cent between 2013 and 2023 on a non seasonally adjusted basis (Statistics Canada, 2024b).

In addition to transportation costs, vendors face rising expenses for insurance and commercial space. After contracting during the pandemic, commercial rent is climbing. Statistics Canada's commercial rents services price index grew by 11.7 per cent between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2019 in Ontario (earliest data available given a change in base year) (Statistics Canada, 2024c).

Despite key operational costs rising in the last decade, ADP approved price levels for mobility devices, which determine what a vendor can charge for products, have either decreased or have remained unchanged for over a decade. The approved price for the most commonly purchased adult wheelchair (manual dynamic tilt) was lowered by 13.7 per cent in 2015 (from \$2,446 to \$2,110) and has not been readjusted since (Assistive Devices Program, 2014, 2015). Similarly, ADP cut the approved price for the most common adult walker (type 3) by 21.3 per cent in 2021 (from \$417 to \$328) (Schachow, 2021). This misalignment between higher input costs and lower ADP prices (see Figure 3) generates significant negative pressure on the balance sheets of equipment providers.

**FIGURE 3**

**Variation of Key Operational Costs and ADP Approved Prices (2013 versus 2023)**



## SCOPE OF ADP

Vendors are actively involved throughout the entire process of getting the proper mobility device to a senior. However, the costs associated with providing, fitting, servicing the equipment as well as training clients and caregivers are not adequately covered by ADP. These steps are crucial to ensure clients are comfortable and can safely use their devices to their full potential.

While ADP includes mobility devices and ten other types of equipment, supplies and aids, it does not cover accessibility equipment. For instance, while a wheelchair enables someone to move around their house, it is often not sufficient for aging at home. Additional devices to allow them to safely move from their wheelchair to the toilet and the bed are essential. Similarly, mobility devices will be of limited help in a house with stairs. This is where accessibility equipment like grab bars and lifts can make a big difference in making a home fully accessible for a senior.

Leaving the limitations of ADP unaddressed will have significant negative consequences for Ontario seniors. Previous ADP cuts to funding levels have already reduced the range of mobility equipment available and this could get worse as vendors face increased operational costs. Some smaller companies may exit the market, reducing the options for seniors in terms of providers. This is particularly problematic for rural communities, which are often serviced by small one or two person teams based in nearby bigger cities. In some cases, a vendor might have to drive several hours to get to a small town to assist one or two seniors (e.g., to deliver a product or to make adjustments). This unavoidably results in delays for clients who need mobility equipment.



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Conclusion

## Conclusion

Ontario is at a critical juncture. Long-term care capacity is stretched with thousands of individuals waiting for a bed. As the number of seniors continues to grow, demand for LTC will only worsen. More than 43,000 individuals are waiting for long-term care in Ontario and this number is projected to grow to 48,000 by 2029 (Ontario Long Term Care Home Association, 2024).

The provincial government has committed to building and upgrading long-term care beds, but it will not suffice. Large investments in LTC will also put pressure on the balance sheet of the province. The Ontario government anticipates spending \$8.29 billion in operating expenses for its Long-Term Care Home Program in 2023-2024. This represents a 16.2 per cent increase compared to the 2022-2023 estimates (Government of Ontario, 2023b).

A client-centred approach is needed and assistive devices will play a crucial role in helping seniors stay in their homes longer, which is what most of them want in the first place. A national survey commissioned by March of Dimes Canada found in 2021 found that “Canadians are facing an “aging-in-place gap”, as over three-quarters (78 per cent) of Canadians want to age in their current homes – but just 26 per cent predict they’ll be able to do so” (March of Dimes Canada, 2021).

The Assistive Devices Program is a crucial part of Ontario’s approach to ensure seniors have access to the mobility equipment they need.

However, as this report highlighted, limitations related to approved prices and scope hinder the ability of ADP to comprehensively support aging at home and reduce demand for LTC in the process. This could be addressed by:

- **Considering price adjustments for ADP-funded devices to account for changing market conditions and the rising costs associated with providing mobility equipment.**
- **Expanding ADP coverage to cover accessibility equipment seniors with disabilities need to stay safe in their homes.**

Beyond ADP, the Ontario government should also leverage the tax system to facilitate access to assistive devices. Building on the OSCHTC and SHSTC, the province should **develop an enhanced refundable tax credit to help seniors purchase equipment and make the home alterations they need to age at home.**

More broadly, it should be noted that the assistive devices sector is a foundational partner to help implement bill 135, the Convenient Care at Home Act. Passed in 2023, the bill puts providing home and community care services to patients at the center of the mission of the newly created Ontario Health at Home organization. This organization is the result of the amalgamation of local health integration networks. The assistive devices sector will be extensively involved in enabling and delivering these home and community care services.

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## About the Ontario Home Medical Equipment Providers Association

The Ontario Home Medical Equipment Providers Association (OHMEPA) is an industry association representing providers and manufacturers of Home Medical Equipment in Ontario. Its membership also includes not-for-profit organizations and service providers whose members/customers rely on home medical equipment.

Assistive devices, and particularly mobility equipment, allow Ontarians with disabilities to preserve their independence and to safely move around their homes and communities. OHMEPA's professional, experienced leadership works with stakeholders in the sector to determine issues, develop plans and advocate for results.

### The following OHMEPA members contributed to the realization of this report:

2Care4 Medical Ltd.	Homestead Oxygen & Medical Equipment	Pharmasave Health Care Pharmacy (Sudbury)
Ability Members Group Inc.	Human Care Group	Power Plus Mobility
Access Abilities	Hunt's Healthcare Inc.	Precision Home Medical Equipment
Action Health Care Inc.	Kingston Oxygen	Pride Mobility Products
Airway Surgical Appliances Ltd	Living Well Home Medical Equipment	Seniors Store
Align Home Health Care	Maple Leaf Wheelchair	Soft Touch Mastectomy
Amylior Inc.	MED+ Medical Equipment Distribution	Sunrise Medical Canada Inc.
Berg Access & Mobility	Medability	Superior Home Health Care Barrie
Blake Medical	MED-E-OX Medical Equipment & Home Respiratory Ltd	Superior Home Health Care Thunder Bay
Broda Enterprises	Mobility2Home	Val Est Pharmacy
Capital Home Medical Equipment	Motion LP	VGM Group Services
Comfort Mobility Inc.	Motion Composites	Wardrop Pharmasave Home Health & Mobility Store
Conval-Aid	NSM dba Canada Care Medical Inc.	Wellness & Mobility
Drive Medical	Ontario Medical Supply Inc.	Yurek Pharmacy Ltd
Durham Medical	Permobil	
Essential Mobility Products Inc.		
Handi-House		
HME Mobility Ltd.		

