
PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING: SENIORS' SUPPORTIVE HOUSING WITH ASSISTED LIVING INITIATIVE

Overview

Across our communities, a growing number of low-income seniors are struggling to maintain safe, healthy, and dignified lives as they age. Many live on fixed incomes that do not keep pace with rising housing and service costs. They are increasingly facing challenges related to mobility, dementia, diabetes, and other age-related health conditions – yet they cannot afford the supportive services required. Long-term care waitlists continue to grow, leaving many seniors without viable options for appropriate care or assisted living accommodation.

This pressure is also being felt in the hospital system through Alternate Level of Care (ALC) cases, where seniors may no longer require acute hospital care but cannot be safely discharged because the right housing, home care, community support, or long-term care option is not available. For many low-income seniors, the barrier is not simply medical. It is the absence of a safe, affordable, and supported place to go.

Current Challenges

Within our Community Housing portfolio, we are witnessing more seniors “ageing in place”. Requests for accessibility-related modifications such as grab bars, ramps, or bathroom conversions have increased substantially. However, ageing building infrastructure and limited budgets restrict our ability to meet these needs. At the same time, our Homelessness By-Name List shows a troubling rise in the number of seniors experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Without intervention, these trends will continue to place strain on health-care, emergency, and housing systems.

The lack of supportive, affordable housing options also contributes to unnecessary pressure on local hospitals. Seniors who are medically stable may remain in hospital as ALC patients because they cannot safely return to unsuitable housing where they do not have adequate supports at home. This creates a human cost for the senior and their family, while also limiting access to acute-care beds for patients who need them.

Proposed Initiative

To address these urgent needs, the County of Renfrew, in partnership with Pembroke Regional Hospital (PRH) and Carefor Health & Community Services Renfrew County, is proposing the **Seniors' Supportive Housing with Assisted Living Initiative**, an innovative housing and health partnership designed to help low-income seniors age with dignity, stability, and appropriate supports in their own communities.

The proposed model is intended to create a continuum of housing and support options for seniors whose needs fall between fully independent living and long-term care with the goal to decrease pressure on LTC. While the initiative will provide immediate supportive housing opportunities for low-income seniors and help address hospital discharge pressures, it is also designed to serve as a foundation for future Assisted Living expansion. As provincial opportunities emerge to fund Assisted Living capacity, the partnership between the County of Renfrew, Pembroke Regional Hospital, and Carefor will be well-positioned to build upon this model and deliver enhanced levels of support that enable seniors to remain safely in their communities for as long as possible.

A key opportunity of this initiative is its potential to support hospital flow by providing a safe, community-based option for appropriate Alternate Level of Care seniors. These are individuals who may no longer require acute hospital care but cannot safely return to their current living situation without housing stability, personal supports, health monitoring, and care coordination. By combining affordable housing, PRH's future assisted living services, and Carefor's on-site supports, the initiative can help create a more dignified transition from hospital to community while reducing unnecessary pressure on acute-care and long-term care systems.

Through this initiative, we will:

- **Expand our Rent Supplement Program** to increase access to affordable rental units for low- and fixed-income seniors.
- **Create a community-based assisted living option for appropriate seniors**, through hospital assisted living service that include community paramedicine and primary care support, Ontario Health @ Home, Carefor, and other partners to support medically stable seniors who no longer require acute hospital care but need affordable housing and coordinated health and social supports before they can safely live in the community.
- **Integrate comprehensive health supports** to address common conditions such as diabetes, dementia, cardiovascular disease, and mobility challenges.

- **Facilitate rapid access to medical care** through our community paramedicine (CP) and Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (VTAC) program infrastructure, including transport to hospital when required and medical support through our primary-care teams.
- **Leverage Carefor's existing supports and amenities**, including access to a cafeteria, opportunities for social connection, recreational programming, and community activities – helping reduce isolation and promote overall well-being among participating seniors.

The Partnership

The initiative will be jointly led by the County of Renfrew and Pembroke Regional Hospital, bringing together expertise in housing, homelessness prevention, community services, healthcare, and hospital discharge planning. Carefor will provide the supportive living environment and on-site services necessary to support residents' daily needs and overall well-being.

The County of Renfrew will act as the lead housing and community services partner, coordinating rent supplements, housing supports, homelessness prevention resources, and program administration.

Pembroke Regional Hospital will provide assisted living services that will include the well-established Community paramedicine service and primary-care support as well as other partners in health and social services that can provide support to keeping seniors out of acute care and long-term care. The hospital will also play a key leadership role in identifying seniors who would benefit from community-based supportive housing, coordinating discharge planning for appropriate assisted living and/or ALC patients, supporting admission avoidance strategies, and helping design future Assisted Living pathways as part of an integrated seniors care continuum. Pembroke Regional Hospital will serve as the lead clinical transition partner, working with care teams and discharge planners to identify appropriate seniors who would benefit from a supported community-based housing option rather than remaining in hospital or entering higher-cost institutional care.

We have secured a long-term lease with Carefor Health & Community Services Renfrew County for a dedicated block of rooms within the facility to serve as the foundation of this initiative. Carefor's mandate – to provide home-centred, community-based, fiscally responsible nursing and health care services – aligns perfectly with our vision to promote the health and wellness of seniors in our region. This partnership will allow us to deliver wrap-around housing and health supports in a safe, supportive, and accessible environment.

Funding Request

This initiative represents an opportunity for Ontario to test a scalable rural model that integrates affordable housing, assisted living, community paramedicine, hospital discharge planning, and community supports into a single coordinated response to seniors' care.

Funding will be directed toward rental supplements, accessibility modifications, and coordination of housing supports for the County of Renfrew as well as a dedicated assisted living services funding envelope for Pembroke Regional Hospital.

This investment would help reduce pressure on long-term care, hospital, emergency, and homelessness systems by creating a practical community-based option for low-income seniors, including those who may otherwise remain in hospital as Alternate Level of Care patients due to the lack of safe, affordable, and supported housing options. It would also support reductions in chronic homelessness among seniors reflected on our By-Name List and improve the quality of life for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Why Now

Ontario is facing unprecedented pressures related to hospital occupancy, Alternate Level of Care patients, long-term care waitlists, and an aging population. Rural communities experience these pressures differently because housing, health care, transportation, and social supports are often delivered through multiple organizations with limited resources.

Renfrew County and its partners have assembled the local relationships, infrastructure, and operational capacity needed to launch an integrated solution immediately. The opportunity is not simply to create additional housing units, but to demonstrate how housing and health care can work together to prevent hospitalization, accelerate discharge, and support seniors to age safely in their communities.

Conclusion

With your support, we can ensure that seniors in our communities are not left behind – empowering them to age safely, independently, and with dignity in the homes and communities they know. This initiative gives the health and housing systems something they do not currently have enough of – a practical, supported place for vulnerable seniors to go before their situation becomes homelessness, hospitalization, or long-term care by default.