

OACAO Applauds the Government of Ontario for Increasing Funding and Expanding Access to Seniors Active Living Centres Programs

NEWS RELEASE (Dec 6, 2024) - The Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario (OACAO) welcomes the Ontario government's announcement of increased operating funds and the expansion of the Seniors Active Living Centres (SALCs) Program.

"The OACAO is the reason we are able to expand the number of Seniors Active Living Centres and increase funding," said Hon. Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

"Thanks to Sue, her leadership and the entire OACAO team, the province is able to grow the number of Seniors Active Living Centres by 100 over the next year and add \$17 million dollars over the next three years to make sure our seniors stay fit, active, healthy, socially connected, close to their homes and in their communities. Thank you OACAO!"

Hon. Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility

This increase, announced today by Minister Cho was highlighted in the Fall Economic Statement and described as a meaningful investment in the well-being of Ontario's aging population.

Beginning in 2025, base funding for SALCs will rise from approximately \$50,000 to \$55,000 per SALC program, following a recent increase from \$42,700 to \$50,000. These investments ensure continued support for existing programs while providing resources for new initiatives.

"This announcement demonstrates the government's commitment to seniors in Ontario," said Sue Hesjedahl, Executive Director of OACAO. "We've worked closely with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility to emphasize the critical need for increased funding for SALCs in Ontario. This investment will ensure that SALCs continue to enhance seniors' quality of life through social engagement, health promotion, and community connection."

Sue Hesjedahl, Executive Director of OACAO

Over the next three years, the government is committing nearly \$17 million to establish 100 new SALC programs across Ontario. These programs are designed to foster wellness, reduce ageism, and help seniors stay active, independent, and engaged in their communities. This funding builds on the government's annual \$15 million investment in the SALC program.

To further enhance access, regulatory changes to the **Seniors Active Living Centres Act, 2017**, passed in June 2024, now allow a broader range of organizations—including Legions, cultural organizations, and Indigenous organizations—to apply for SALC program funding. Following a province-wide call for proposals this summer, the government is currently reviewing applications to launch new programs and expand services.

SALCs are instrumental in addressing the unique needs of Ontario's seniors, offering programs that reduce social isolation, promote active living, and support mental and physical health. This funding increase will help SALCs expand their reach, particularly in underserved rural and Indigenous communities where the need for these services is greatest.

"This funding is a step forward in addressing the growing demands placed on SALCs," added Hesjedahl. "We're excited to see the government's response to the needs of our members, empowering centres to expand their reach and strengthen their role as community hubs for seniors."

Sue Hesjedahl, Executive Director of OACAO

Looking ahead, the OACAO remains committed to working with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility to advocate for further operational and program funding to meet the growing needs of Ontario's aging population. With more seniors relying on these centres each year, sustained investment is essential to maintain and expand high-quality programs and services.

For further information or to get involved:

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About OACAO:

Established in 1973, the Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario (OACAO) represents over 240 member organizations and more than 200,000 seniors across the province. OACAO is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults through advocacy, support, and the development of quality and relevant resources and services for community-based older adult centres. It is a strong supporter of Seniors Active Living Centres as hubs of connection, health, and activity for seniors across Ontario.

For details on the funding announcement, visit Ontario Expanding SALCs.