

The Cost of Independence

Why Ontario Needs to Regulate the Cost of Assistive Devices

1 The Issue

Assistive devices — wheelchairs, hearing aids, communication devices, mobility aids, and other equipment funded through Ontario's Assistive Devices Program (ADP) — allow people with disabilities, chronic illness, and age-related conditions to live independently, work, and participate in their communities. They are health care. But Ontario's funding model has not kept pace with real-world costs, leaving many residents unable to afford the devices they need.

2 How the Funding Gap Works

Ontario's Assistive Devices Program was designed to share the cost of essential equipment between government and the people who rely on it. In practice, the gap between what ADP covers and what devices actually cost has been widening:

75% / 25%

The Ministry of Health funds up to 75% of an approved device price; the client pays the remaining 25% as a minimum consumer contribution.

- If a device costs more than ADP's price ceiling, the client pays that difference in full — on top of the 25% contribution.
- ADP price ceilings are not consistently reviewed or adjusted to reflect current market prices, so the gap between what ADP covers and what a device actually costs tends to widen over time.

The result: seniors on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, and low-income Ontarians are often priced out of devices essential to their health, safety, and independence — or take on debt to obtain them.

3 What CFUW Ontario Council Is Asking For

CFUW Ontario Council's 2024 resolution, Assistive Medical Devices, asks the Ontario government to undertake the following to close this gap:

RESOLVED, that CFUW Ontario Council urges the Government of Ontario to confirm that assistive devices, as defined under Ontario Regulation 134/98, are recognized as an integral part of health care.

RESOLVED, that CFUW Ontario Council urges the Government of Ontario to establish an Assistive Device Review Board to regulate the cost of assistive devices.

4 Why It Matters

- Recognizing assistive devices as health care anchors funding decisions in an explicit public commitment, rather than treating them as a discretionary program subject to change.
- A standing Assistive Device Review Board would give Ontario a mechanism to regularly reassess ADP funding levels and price ceilings against actual market costs — closing the affordability gap without waiting for ad hoc policy reviews.
- This is an equity issue: cost barriers to assistive devices fall hardest on those already facing the greatest barriers to participation — seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income Ontarians.

5 The Ask: What Your Club Can Do

Ontario Council has written to Premier Ford and relevant Ministers and Critics about these issues. We are asking clubs who share these concerns about the

affordability and oversight of assistive devices in Ontario to send a similar letter to their own local MPP.

A customizable template letter is available for clubs to personalize and send and can be found on the OC website. A page listing companies that sell assistive devices is also online.

Find your MPP:

ola.org/en/members/current

or ola.org/en/members/parliament-44