



## A Brain Strategy for Ontario

### Neurological Conditions in Ontario

- More than 2 million Ontarians live with a neurological disease, disorder or injury today;
- Neurological conditions affect Ontarians at every age and stage of life – some are genetic, some are acquired, most develop for no known reason;
- There are limited treatments for neurological conditions but NO CURES;
- As our population ages, the prevalence of neurological conditions is expected to increase significantly – for example, the number of Ontarians with dementia is expected to increase to 2.3 times the current level by 2038.
- A 2006 report conducted by the World Health Organization reported “a large body of evidence shows that policy-makers and health-care providers may be unprepared to cope with the predicted rise in the prevalence of neurological and other chronic disorders and the disability resulting from the extensions of life expectancy and aging populations globally.”

### Living Well with a Brain Condition

Living well with a brain condition is much more than a ‘health’ issue. It requires the active engagement of the private sector, non-profit sector and key government ministries including Education, Research and Innovation, Community and Social Service, Finance, Health Promotion, Child and Youth Services, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Labour, Transportation, and through them, the broader public sector.

In short, it requires a thoughtful response from government, industry and the non-profit sector that addresses all aspects of an individual’s life: family relationships, education, income, employment, housing and social participation.

With support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ontario Working Group engaged in a long-range scenario planning exercise throughout 2009 and 2010. This work included formal consultation with over 250 individuals and organizations and resulted in a report to the Government of Ontario entitled *Wired for Success: Toward an Ontario Brain Strategy* (December 2010).

### Ontario Brain Strategy

The NHCC is advancing the implementation of an Ontario Brain Strategy by developing realistic, actionable recommendations for four key ministries – Health and Long-Term Care, Research and Innovation, Education and Community and Social Services. Most recommendations do not require a financial investment, only a willingness to consider doing things in different ways.

Specifically, we have asked Ministries to collaborate with the NHCC on the following:

#### Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

1. Pilot a multi-disciplinary neurology clinic in Sudbury to be affiliated with the academic health science centre;
2. Review the scope, scale and intensity of general neurologist practices (current and future state) as part of the upcoming Ontario Medical Association/MOHLTC negotiations;
3. Neurologists join Family Health Teams as an ongoing, integrated team member (e.g. sessional fees for education one half-day per month);
4. Enhance and refine the medical school curriculum to focus on general neurology (i.e. not only specialties); and
5. Develop a comprehensive system of self-managed supports for individual governed care, working with MCSS as part of the current social services review.

## Ministry of Education

1. Review current policies and procedures at the Ministry and board levels to better understand how they impact students with brain conditions.
2. Better equip educators to recognize symptoms and address the needs of their students with neurological conditions.
3. Enrich the academic curriculum to include grade-appropriate education about the brain – how it is formed, how it works, how it guides us through life.

## Ministry of Community and Social Services

1. Provide access to a navigator/specialized services advocate at the community level who is knowledgeable of the local system programs and services (cross-sectoral) and provides information and supports through transitions;
2. Strengthen the new assessment procedure for Developmental Services and Supports for the transition from childhood to adult services by:
  - a. Developing an education campaign for parents and caregivers, educators, and other involved ministries (e.g. EDU, MOHLTC, CYS), and provide this information a few years ahead of the child leaving the education system so there is sufficient time for planning,
  - b. Providing the option for the assessor to visit the child in his/her environment in order for the assessor to better understand the living conditions, family situation, etc.
3. Develop a comprehensive system of self-managed supports for individual governed care, working with MOHLTC as part of the current social services review.

## Ministry of Research and Innovation (*work underway*)

1. Establish a formal collaboration between NHCC and OBI to ground Ontario's research and innovation investments in the ongoing needs of the community;
2. Provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and networking between researchers, innovators, policy makers and consumers with an annual Brain Summit;
3. Use creative approaches to start-up capital, support entrepreneurial incubators by launching an annual design competition for engineering, IT, architecture, urban development and artificial intelligence students to develop innovative solutions for challenges faced by those living with neurological conditions with a long term goal of Ontario as a leader in the neurological marketplace; and
4. Elevate the profile and engagement of HTX.ca in the neurological field by either providing a specific funding stream for neurological projects or applying a neurological lens as a criteria in decision-making.

In addition, we strongly encourage the Government of Ontario to:

1. Establish an inter-ministry panel (MCSS, MEDU, MOHLTC, MCYS, MRI) that meets regularly to identify issues, speak with experts and be responsible for the coordination of services for those at key transitions, including from childhood to adulthood; and,
2. Institutionalize the use of a common framework and lexicon for use between ministries, programs and primary care physicians with electronic health records to improve research, policy development, and program delivery and management.

### ***About Neurological Health Charities Canada***

*Neurological Health Charities Canada (NHCC) is a coalition of 26 health charities that represent people with chronic, often progressive, neurological and/or neuromuscular diseases, disorders and injuries (brain disorders) in Canada. The NHCC's mission is to improve the quality of life for people living with brain conditions by elevating brain health to the top of government agendas; increasing awareness and influencing government decision makers regarding brain health; and, ensuring that research, prevention, treatments and supports for those living with chronic brain conditions are universally accessible and fully funded.*

For more information about the NHCC, visit [www.mybrainmatters.ca](http://www.mybrainmatters.ca) or call (416) 227-3396.