



# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## More Attention Needed to Placement of High-Needs Individuals in Mental-Health Housing and Supportive Services: Auditor General

(TORONTO) In addition to lacking information about the demand for and cost-effectiveness of mental-health supportive housing, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Ministry) also does not prioritize the placement of high-need individuals, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2016 Annual Report*.

The audit found that the wait lists the Ministry has for ministry-funded supportive housing do not prioritize high-need individuals or those awaiting discharge from psychiatric hospitals. The cost to keep an individual in a psychiatric hospital is about nine times that of supportive housing. People usually move from the wait list into available housing in the order in which they apply.

“The Province does not measure outcomes for individuals in its mental-health supportive housing programs, and so may not be making the right choices to ensure that limited resources go to providing service to those most in need,” she said today after tabling the Report in the Legislature.

“As well, the province has not evaluated the most cost-effective way to provide mental-health supportive housing using, for example, rent supplements or dedicated housing programs.”

The shift from institutional to community mental-health services that began in the 1990s increased the need for community-based mental-health housing with support services. As of March 31, 2016, the Ministry funded over 12,300 supportive housing units under four programs established between 1964 and 2000. For the most part, not-for-profit mental health housing agencies operate these programs using government funds.

In 2015/16, the Ministry spent more than \$100 million on operating and capital costs of mental-health housing, and, through the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) \$629 million on mental-health support services, including services for clients living in mental-health supportive housing.

Other significant findings in the Report include:

- The LHINs do not monitor whether mental-health supportive housing clients are receiving appropriate supportive services, and the Ministry does not monitor whether housing providers are maintaining housing stock in good condition.
- The Ministry identified the need for a policy on housing as early as 1999, but no such policy has been developed since then. At the time of our audit, the Ministry and three other ministries that administer other forms of supportive housing were working on a new supportive housing framework, but as the four ministries don't expect to implement the framework for 10 years, almost three decades will have passed since the need for such a policy was first identified.
- Some supportive housing clients no longer need or want support services, but can still live in ministry-funded supportive housing as it is permanent housing. The Ministry had not provided any direction to housing agencies to guide transitioning efforts.

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To view the report, please visit [www.auditor.on.ca](http://www.auditor.on.ca).

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