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Provincial underfunding leading to cuts to services for seniors & disabled persons, says Olde Forge CRC

OTTAWA, March 21, 2023 – Thousands of vulnerable individuals (seniors & disabled persons) will be at risk of losing services when community support providers start cutting back on programs beginning in April, as a result of Provincial Government underfunding.

Ottawa's Olde Forge Community Resource Centre, one of 22 community support service agencies in Ottawa, will be announcing cuts to community healthcare services starting next month, as the Government of Ontario has restricted 2023 funding. Save for a 3.5% increase this year, these agencies are surviving on 2012 levels, says Olde Forge CRC Executive Director Colleen Taylor: "Keeping our funding to 2012 levels doesn't take into account the growth in demand for our services since then by seniors in our community. Unfortunately, it means cutting back our programs when the need is growing."

The Provincial Government has limited funding for Ottawa's community care sector to 2012 levels, leading to cuts in services for all community support service agencies across Ottawa and the region, including the Olde Forge. The cuts will affect seniors and adults with disabilities living independently at home with community support assistance. The cuts are the result of years of chronic provincial underfunding despite increased demand and inflation.

Chandra Pasma, the MPP for Ottawa West—Nepean said: "The Ford government is continuing to underfund vital supports and services like the Olde Forge CRC that keep people out of our hospitals. An investment of \$7 million is all it would take to ensure these organizations can maintain this level of service, but by failing to provide this funding this government is adding an unnecessary burden on our already overwhelmed health care system."

Community Support Services (also known as CSS services) are a critical part of Ontario's healthcare system. They facilitate hospital discharges, ensure a meal will be delivered to the home, the patient will be transported to a follow-up appointment, or a palliative patient will have support to die at home. CSS programs give relief to caregivers of loved ones with dementia, assist working adults with mobility challenges get ready for work, prevent isolation, and promote wellness of seniors through social and fitness programs.

Said Joel Vansnick, Chair of the Olde Forge CRC Board of Directors: "This action by the Ontario Government is short-sighted and damaging. It will slow down hospital discharges and increase Emergency Department visits to Ottawa's hospitals when community providers start turning away referrals next month. Meanwhile, the Provincial Government is sitting on \$1 Billion in funding that was announced last year and never made it to the pockets of struggling agencies trying to keep people out of their more expensive and overburdened hospital partners."

The Olde Forge CRC has been providing community support services to seniors and adults with disabilities for over 40 years in Ottawa's west end. It is part of a network of Community Support Service providers in Ottawa whose goal is to keep people living safely and independently at home where they want to stay.

For more information contact:

Colleen Taylor

Executive Director, The Olde Forge Community Resource Centre

c.taylor@oldeforge.ca

613-829-9777