

Canadian Assistive Devices Association

The Canadian Assistive Devices Association (CADA) represents Canada's manufacturers, distributors and vendors of medical devices and supplies. The scope of products include mobility items like wheelchairs and walkers, incontinence products, hearing aids, masks, gloves, portable oxygen supply devices, patient transfer systems, enteral feeding devices, prosthetics and orthotics. These products are used in homes, hospitals and long-term care facilities and promote independence for seniors as well as individuals with disabilities.

The medical devices industry is worth approximately \$1.4 billion annually in Canada. Ontario accounts for approximately 44% of this expenditure, or \$620 million. About 80% of the manufacturing and distribution companies have their head offices located in Ontario. The Ontario members of CADA include approximately 100 distributors and manufacturers, as well nearly 250 vendors. Ontario assistive device manufacturers, vendors and distributors provide secure employment to approximately 6,000 Ontarians.

The Assistive Devices Program (ADP)

In Ontario, assistive devices are funded through the Assistive Devices Program (ADP), an arm of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. ADP funds products in the following categories: Wheelchairs, Positioning and Ambulation Aids, Hearing Aids, Home Oxygen, Communication Devices, Diabetes Equipment & Supplies, Enteral Feeding Supplies, Insulin Pumps and Supplies, Orthotic Devices, Ostomy Supplies, Pressure Modification Devices, Prosthetic Devices, Respiratory Supplies and Equipment, and Visual Aids.

There are a couple funding models within ADP, including the leasing of products such as ventilators, as well as a grant system, as is the case for ostomy reimbursement. However, the major model under which ADP operates is the 75/25 co-pay model. Under this model, ADP pays 75% towards the purchase of a product, and the client or a third party funding agency, such as the MS Society or the March of Dimes, pays the 25% client portion. Most mobility products, ambulatory aids, positioning aids, and their related products fall within this funding model.

While CADA recognizes there is increased pressure on Ontario's healthcare budget, addressing the issues of assistive device reimbursement and product approvals will go a long way to keeping Ontarians healthy, independent and safe at home, which will in turn have measurable impact on provincial healthcare expenditure.

We respectfully request action on the following three issues:

Issue #1: Reimbursement

Patients are waiting three months or more to receive approval from ADP for reimbursement for an item required for their basic mobility, such as a wheelchair. Patients face undue hardship and restricted independence due to these long waits. Many vendors will now provide the patient with their equipment right away, if the client pays the 25% co-pay up front. ADP makes it clear that if the vendor provides the equipment prior to receiving the approval, the vendor exposes themselves financially even as they seek to minimize the client's time without his/her assistive device.



Those vendors who do provide this over-and-above service to their clients are faced with carrying significant receivables until ADP approves the application for funding, which allows the vendor to be paid.

Proposed Solution:

- Have ADP commit to more acceptable timeframes for reimbursement, such as three weeks. Even the current timeframes of eight to 10 weeks seem to be met with a sense of complacency and are exacerbated during peak vacation times. In order to accomplish this goal, a one-time investment of additional labour hours would be required.
- Have ADP be accountable to meeting stated timeframes.
- Development of electronic submission forms for ADP.

Issue #2: New products for reimbursement

Ontarians have limited access to many products that play an important role in helping seniors and those with disabilities live independently and safely in their own homes for longer. In many cases, family caregivers need equipment such as patient transfer systems, toileting aids and bathroom safety products in order to care for their loved ones at home.

Proposed Solution:

- Fund additional items for reimbursement from ADP such as bathroom safety products, and patient transfer and accessibility equipment, so that Ontarians can live independently longer rather than in long-term care facilities.

Issue #3: Product approvals

Ontarians often suffer delays at being able to access new technology because it takes months of testing in order to have new products listed for reimbursement. For clients who depend on assistive devices for their quality of life, the cost of delays is significant.

Prior to products being listed for reimbursement in Ontario, detailed documentation is submitted to ADP, and the devices are tested at one of two testing facilities: one in London (St. Joseph's Health Care) and the other in Ottawa (The Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre). However, prior to introducing products to the Ontario market, most products have already undergone significant testing and approval, as required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United Laboratories (UL), and other agencies. Additionally, all manufacturers perform their own stringent in-house testing prior to submission to government and also have testing done by third party independent testing centres.

Proposed Solution:

- Implement responsive product approval timelines that take into account prior testing.
- Involve the multi-disciplinary ADP Equipment Advisory Sub-Committee to oversee process.
- Coordinate testing at the two Ontario facilities. If the volume is too great at these centres, contract out testing to deal with the backlog.