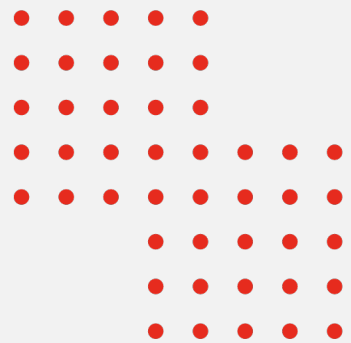




Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2025 Federal Budget

August 2, 2024



Association canadienne
des **soins de longue durée**



Canadian Association
for **Long Term Care**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term Recommendations

- 1 That the Government of Canada support long-term care system readiness once a Safe Long Term Care Act comes into force, by investing in necessary resources to improve operations, human resources capacity, and data collection.
- 2 That the Government of Canada broaden and extend ongoing immigration programs to welcome qualified health professionals in to work specifically in the long-term care sector.

Long Term Recommendations

- 3 That the Government of Canada ensure health human resource planning has specific considerations for long-term care and is captured in the health workforce sectoral planning that is in progress with Health Canada, Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Health Workforce Canada, Canadian Institute for Health Information, Statistics Canada, and other government funded projects.
- 4 That the Government of Canada provide greater planning support and investment for infrastructure and development in long-term care.

Call to Action on Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence

- 5 The Government of Canada – through the pan-Canadian Health Organizations – investigate and invest in new technology adoption that can be leveraged in long-term care homes, and work with long-term care to develop a program to adopt new technologies over time, to ensure their successful implementation.
- 6 That the Government of Canada conduct an environment scan to understand how others are regulating Artificial Intelligence, particularly as it relates to long term care, residential care settings and older adult services.

SUMMARY

The time has come for visionary planning and substantial investment in resources that can fundamentally transform the long-term care (LTC) system for the better.

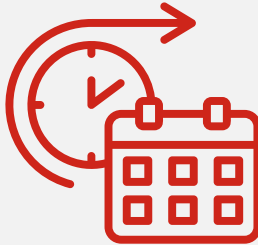
There has been promise – with the federal and provincial Aging with Dignity bilateral agreements, however, there is still more to be done.

As we face demographic shifts and increasing demands for care, our current systems are continuing to face a crisis. We must embrace a future focused strategy that includes bold initiatives in infrastructure development, workforce enhancement, and technology integration.

The following three sections detail:



**The Short Term
Priorities**

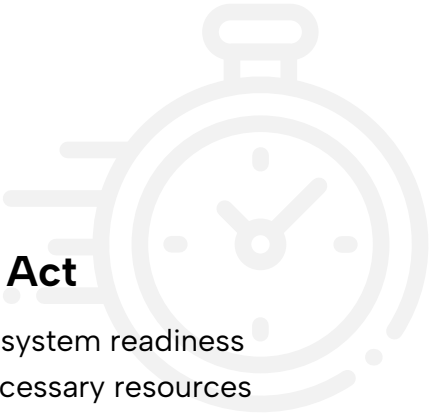


**The Long Term
Priorities**



**A Call To Action
On Information
Technology And
Artificial
Intelligence In LTC**

SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES



Supportive Resources for a Safe Long Term Care Act

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada support LTC system readiness once a Safe Long Term Care Act comes into force, by investing in necessary resources to improve operations, human resources capacity, and data collection.

As the LTC community awaits the tabling of the Safe Long-Term Care Act, concerns have been raised that without sufficient resources, proactively organized, LTC homes will not be properly positioned to implement any forthcoming change.

Working with provincial and territorial governments, the federal government must play a leadership role to ensure that LTC homes have the necessary resources available to improve and follow the provisions within a Safe Long-Term Care Act that would benefit residents and staff in all provinces and territories. This includes funding for improved operations, human resources capacity, and data collection.

Immediate Health Human Resources Solutions

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada broaden and extend ongoing immigration programs to welcome qualified health professionals in to work specifically in the LTC sector.

LTC homes rely on a wide range of skills from health professionals ranging from nurses and personal support workers (PSW) to administrative and support staff such as nutrition managers and cooks, recreation program managers, cleaning, and laundry staff. This accounts for all the different roles needed to support safe and quality LTC. According to data from Statistics Canada, in the third quarter of 2023, there were 33,950 vacancies in nursing and residential care facilities¹. There are many positive initiatives underway, but there is still more work to be done as we anticipate a likely wave of retirements among our workforce that is consistent with the overall population aging². Training a health care professional takes time and there is an immediate need to address the shortage of staff in LTC. The government’s efforts to streamline processes and eliminate barriers for immigration is a prime example of where we should aim to continue to expand and expedite for improved staffing in LTC homes.

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb1/en/tv.action?pid=1410032602>
² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220427/dq220427a-eng.htm>

To that end, the government should continue to invest in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada initiatives to reduce processing times for qualified health professionals who are applying to work specifically in a LTC home. As well, the government should provide additional resources and funding for employers who are employing newcomers who are health care professionals by expanding existing settlement and credential recognition support.

LONG-TERM PRIORITIES

The aging population will inevitably lead to higher demand for LTC, and despite efforts being made to build LTC homes and recruit abroad, this continues to be an incredible challenge. There is a need for comprehensive planning to ensure the safety and quality of the LTC sector. In the following section we will focus on two areas that require long-term planning: health human resources and infrastructure.

Long-Term Care Health Human Resource Planning

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada ensure health human resource planning has specific considerations for LTC and is captured in the health workforce sectoral planning that is in progress with Health Canada, Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Health Workforce Canada, Canadian Institute for Health Information, Statistics Canada, and other government funded projects.

Recruitment and retention remain critical issues in the LTC system. In addition to the immediate work needed to address the staffing shortages in LTC, the sector is also in need of long-term health human resource planning.

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care is pleased to see the investments made by the federal government to support work in identifying long-term solutions to address health workforce needs. We encourage government to continue with this crucial work and to ensure that LTC is highlighted and positioned as an integral part of the health care system.

Planning for an appropriate health workforce involves collecting data on the current health workforce to determine what is needed. It is also necessary to emphasize the importance of collecting microdata in order to determine the specific needs of the LTC sector. Without sector specific data, the needs of the LTC system remain unknown and therefore unmet.

As part of a comprehensive health workforce plan for LTC, all care team members must be considered in addition to physicians and nurses. Personal support workers play a vital role in providing direct care to residents of LTC. Personal support workers are not a part of a regulated profession in all provinces, and it can be challenging to quantify them and the work they do. By taking steps such as supporting the advancement of the National Occupational Standard for personal care providers³, a nationally recognized occupation with consistent knowledge competencies will create a defined national occupational group, that is essential to health workforce planning for long term care and the healthcare system at large.

Caregivers are also a crucial part of Canada's care economy and are also facing many challenges such as poor mental health and financial stress. There is need for data collection and policy solutions to address these issues and to support a National Caregiving Strategy which will help develop evidence-informed and collaborative actions to prioritize caregivers in Canada⁴.

Furthermore, comprehensive health human resource planning addresses the critical issue of long-term retention. By developing a strategic plan for the future health care workforce, we can create built-in career advancement opportunities for staff, reduce burnout through adequate staffing levels, and enhance overall working conditions⁵. This proactive approach ensures a sustainable health care system that benefits both providers and residents and patients.

Effective planning for future health human resources in LTC is crucial. Without it, the ongoing issues in retention and recruitment will be perpetuated. To ensure that we deliver safe and quality LTC to the most vulnerable Canadians, we must prioritize and improve our strategies for the sector.

Long-Term Care Infrastructure and Development Planning

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada provide greater planning support and investment for infrastructure and development in long-term care.

³ https://nos-nnp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CICan_NationalOccupationalStandard_PersonalCareProviders-2.pdf

⁴ https://canadiancaregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CCCE_Caring-in-Canada.pdf

⁵ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/fcc/ca-en-canada-2030-senior-centric-strategy-policy-brief-aoda.pdf>

As Canada's aging population grows, the need for LTC homes will simultaneously grow in demand. In the next 20 years, one in four Canadians will be 65 years of age or older⁶. To appropriately and effectively prepare for this increase in population, planning is necessary to determine future needs.

We ask that the federal government provide more support and investment for infrastructure renewal and new development in LTC so that LTC homes can ensure safe environments and provide Canadians with the quality care and life in homes that they deserve. See CALTC's Position Paper Canada's Other Housing Crisis: Long-term care homes have a building problem.

CALL TO ACTION ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Recommendation: The Government of Canada – through the pan-Canadian Health Organizations – investigate and invest in new technology adoption that can be leveraged in LTC homes, and work with LTC to develop a program to adopt new technologies over time, to ensure their successful implementation and usage to support quality.

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada conduct an environmental scan to understand how others are regulating Artificial Intelligence, particularly as it relates to long term care, residential care settings and older adult services. Specific considerations include rigorous safety assessments, post-market surveillance and ensure continued effectiveness of AI devices that could be used by residents of LTC or leveraged by health professionals supporting LTC residents.

Adoption of new technologies in a LTC setting is essential to continue to improve care and create more efficient operations, however, the adoption of new technology is fraught with challenges. At its core, long-term care is longitudinal, while most technologies, including electronic health records (EHRs) are designed for episodic care. Combined with the complexity of resident needs, integration and interoperability are principles that are actually more fundamental in long-term care technology than in other sectors.

⁶ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/this-is-what-canada-will-look-like-in-20-years-are-we-ready-for-an-aging-population-1.6652355>

LTC continues to adapt to ever-changing and complex health care needs of residents and, often, the development of technologies that could support this change management are not built functionally in a manner LTC can adopt. There are a range of information technologies (IT) options that can enable better outcomes in a LTC setting, including electronic health records, safety monitoring of residents, smart devices to manage a resident's physical space as well as communication with staff (voice operated devices or touchless hardware), as well as artificial intelligence which can support the improved functionality of devices.

Technology alone will not solve all of the challenges facing our long-term care sector. Technology, and digital tools in particular, need to be recognized as key enablers of care delivery, alongside beds and staffing. Further to the challenges Canada faces on health IT, long-term care in particular is often ignored in federal and provincial IT planning and investments (which tend to be acute care focused), leaving it further and further behind. Initiatives like [Project AMPLIFI](#) in Ontario demonstrate just how important the sector is, and how much progress can be made when the sector is prioritized.

As the federal government considers the LTC sector, it is crucial that pan-Canadian Data Strategies, including potential regulations if current federal data-blocking legislation is passed, needs to better understand these nuanced needs of the LTC sector and specifically the challenges faced in adopting new technology systems, as described earlier. There is also a need to co-develop any IT and data strategies with residents, caregivers and LTC home operators' technologies that meet their needs while also integrating with the broader health care system (such as electronic medical record modernization and accessibility).

Finally, as our sector continues to seek investment to improve the state of infrastructure, government funding in both infrastructure and infrastructure technology must go hand in hand. Physical space upgrades and renewal need to be done with designs that is appropriate for the adoption of new technologies and resources made available to LTC homes to ensure they have the capacity for adoption.