Key Messages

February 2025

Who is CALTC?

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care (CALTC) is the leading voice for quality long-term care in Canada. Our association is made up of provincial association members and long-term care home operators representing the entire spectrum of long-term care in Canada. Our members are committed to delivering resident-centred care services to seniors when they can no longer live independently.

Key Challenges Facing the Long-Term Care Sector

Two core elements define long-term care: the compassionate individuals who provide care and the environments in which that care is delivered. With Canada's population aging at a significant rate, the demand for long-term care is rising. By 2035, Canada is expected to require 454,000 long-term care home beds[1] , which would be a 129% increase to the 198,000 plus operating today[2]. With at least 21% of our population projected to be aged 65 or older by 2035, Canada will be among the world's super-aged nations[3]. Another pressure point is the increase in the number of people living with more complex social and medical needs. To meet this need, it is essential that our health workforce and long-term care housing expand and adapt in step with the level of care required for our population.

Priority Areas

Health Human Resource Planning

Long-term care homes rely on a wide mix of skills from health professionals such as doctors, nurses and personal support workers (PSW), to administrative and support staff including nutrition managers and cooks, recreation program managers, and environmental service staff.

The vast majority of Canada's long-term care homes are currently understaffed and lack adequate specialized personnel. According to Statistics Canada, in the third quarter of 2024, there were 25,315 job vacancies in long-term care home and residential care facilities[4].

Canada's long-term care sector needs an immediate injection of new staff as well as a long-term plan for recruitment that will ensure the sustainability of the sector. CALTC proposes the following to recommendations to address health human resources needs in long-term care.

[1] https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/2018-11/9228_Meeting%20the%20Demand%20for%20Long-Term%20Care%20Beds_RPT.pdf

[2] https://www.cihi.ca/en/how-many-long-term-care-beds-are-there-in-canada#:~:text=June%2010%2C%202021%20%E2%80%94%20In%20Canada%2C%20there%20are,older%2C%20with%20variations%20across%20the%20provinces%20and%20territories.

[3] https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c2fa7b03917eed9b5a436d8/t/64da284a18aad449147343f0/1692018764623/Long-term%2BCare%2BPaper%2B3-.pdf

[4] https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv!recreate.action?pid=1410044201&selectedNodeIds=2D108&checkedLevels=0D1,2D1&refPeriods=20221001,20240701&dimensionLayouts=layout2,layout3,layout3,layout2&vectorDisplay=false

1. 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 the following organizations/departments:

    - Health Canada;
    - Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada;
    - Health Workforce Canada;
    - Canadian Institute for Health Information;
    - Statistics Canada; and
    - Other government-funded projects.

    Planning for the future health workforce is a crucial step in creating a sustainable long term care sector. Part of this process involves the collection of data that considers the current health trends and how demographics (i.e. an aging population) will influence trends over time, as well as collecting data on the current health workforce to determine supply and existing gaps. Through these processes, it is necessary to collect microdata to determine the specific needs of the long-term care sector. Without sector specific data, the needs of the long-term care system remain unknown and therefore unmet.

2. Support a national credential recognition program for regulated health professionals to enable the movement of health care professionals across jurisdictions.

    The regulation of health professionals varies across provinces and territories, leading to barriers in workforce mobility and integrated health workforce planning[5]. CALTC welcomes efforts to harmonize regulatory standards across Canada to mitigate barriers and benefit the long-term care workforce.

3. Broaden and extend immigration programs to welcome qualified health professionals looking to move to Canada permanently, to work specifically in the long-term care sector.

    Many of the roles in long-term care homes are highly skilled and require the completion of college and university education programs. This means that filling roles in long-term care can take years if we rely purely on developing a domestic workforce pipeline. An example of such programs includes the new immigration pilots that Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced for home care workers[6].

    These pilot programs will replace the previous permanent residence pathways for caregivers. CALTC supports ethical recruitment off health professionals as per the WHO's Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel.

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[5] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9467269/

[6] https://www.cicnews.com/2025/01/canada-announces-launch-date-for-new-permanent-residence-pathways-for-home-care-workers-0150973.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter-20250130#gs.jiv64z

Canadian Association
for **Long Term Care**

This includes workplace equality of gendered and racialized immigrants, support for utilization of professional skills, and support for transition and integration into the workforce.

4. Include long-term care homes into funding opportunities for settlement supports and resources to improve retention rates and support newcomer employees and their families.

   The experiences of long-term care home operators to date with welcoming newcomers to their workforce has offered an important insight into the need for settlement supports. Although these types of services are offered through organizations that are focused on supporting newcomers, their services are often not available in rural/remote communities or limited in urban settings due to growing demand.

   As a result, many long-term care employers are supporting settlement activities such as, housing, transportation, credential recognition support, and various aspects of training. Settlement support for newcomers is essential to retention of valuable workers, but support of these employers is needed with added funding and proper resources. Making settlement funding available to long-term care employers is needed to support related expenses for the newcomer employee and possibly their family to ensure that immigration is a viable option for long-term care homes to use for workforce recruitment.

Infrastructure Investment and Development Planning

Long-term care homes, fundamentally, are just that – homes. Canada's housing crisis has not spared these essential spaces. The shortage extends beyond just the homes we lack; it also affects the quality and accessibility of the homes we have.

The long-term care housing shortage is an issue that continues to grow as Canada's population ages. Without deliberate consideration and action, much of an entire generation of older Canadians will be without the housing and care they need. In the province of Ontario alone, the waitlist for a person to access a long-term care home bed is at 45,000[7].

We also need to ensure the homes we currently have are physically up to date, comfortable, of high quality and able to meet modern safety standards. Many homes were built decades ago when the federal government supported access to capital financing through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). A large number have since become outdated and no longer meet modern standards for infection prevention and control measures, or the impacts of a changing climate.

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[7] https://www.oltca.com/about-long-term-care/the-data/#:~:text=Waitlists%20for%20long-term%20care%20have%20doubled%20in%2010,over%206%20months%20to%20move%20into%20long-term%20care.

As waitlists grow across Canada and our population is projected to age, long–term care home development must be a priority. CALTC recommends the following as solutions to long–term care home infrastructure development.

1. That the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) allows long–term care homes to apply to the MLI Select program to support access to capital financing for new builds and updating existing, outdated home infrastructure.

   The lack of capital financing and development programs for long–term care is a critical challenge as fewer new homes are being built or retrofitted and the waitlist for long–term care continues to grow. Allowing long–term care homes to apply to the MLI Select program could facilitate the development and renovation of long–term care homes enabling more projects and improvements to get off the ground and support Canada's aging population.

2. Offer a specific funding program as part of a National Housing Plan, that is available for long–term care home development.

   There is a housing crisis for a vulnerable population that must be considered as part of the core housing need in Canada. Specifically, it should be considered in policies to support housing development in Canada.

3. Support and scale up existing provincial and territorial housing investment programs targeted for long–term care homes. Examples of existing programs include:

   - Modernizing Funding Model;
   - Accelerated Build Pilot Program;
   - Continuing Care Capital Program;
   - Long–Term Care Capital Infrastructure Pilot Program.

   The federal government and provincial and territorial governments can work together with the long–term care homes to prevent another housing crisis from worsening. With the federal government's support of existing provincial and territorial investment programs, programs can be tailored to the unique needs of jurisdictions.

Infrastructure Technology

Adoption of new technologies in a long–term care home is essential to continue to improve care and create more efficient operations, however, the adoption of new technology does have its challenges if proper planning and investment isn't done up front. At its core, long–term care is longitudinal, meaning that data is collected and

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[8] https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/this-is-what-canada-will-look-like-in-20-years-are-we-ready-for-an-aging-population1.6652355

tracked over long periods of time, while most technologies, including electronic health records (EHRs) are designed for acute care (emergency departments, intensive care, etc.). 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[8].

Long-term care 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 that the long-term care sector can adopt. There are a range of information technologies (IT) options that can enable better outcomes in a long-term care 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 may also create efficiencies for care in long term care homes through improved care coordination, and communication abilities between residents and care team member[9]. New technologies can also improve communication between caregivers and the residents' family members. Although new technology has the potential to improve efficiencies in long term care homes, there needs to be sufficient support and resources for the implementation of these technologies. Ultimately, technology cannot take the place of a caregiver but it can be a supportive tool, particularly when it comes to addressing workload.

Technologies that streamline workflows, support interoperability of resident information, strengthen coordination and scheduling of shifts for care team members, and improve care team member and family communication is essential for the future. This enhances the caregiving process and allows care team members to focus more on resident care with improved working conditions. While new technology is a great opportunity for improving the work-life of caregivers in long term care homes, as well as the care provided to residents, it is important to ensure that these technologies are designed in ways that genuinely reduce caregiver burden, rather than contributing to burnout.

Technology alone will not solve all of the challenges facing our long-term care sector but 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 in 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[10] in Ontario demonstrate just how important the sector is, and how much progress can be made when the sector is prioritized.

[9] Emerging Health Technologies in Long-Term Care and Suppliers' Views on Their Potential to Assist and Support the Workforce – PMC
[10] https://pointclickcare.com/resource/hospital-health-systems-software/ebooks-white-papers/project-amplifi-streamlining-transitions-between-care-institutions-ontario/

As the federal government considers the long-term care sector, it is crucial that pan-Canadian Data Strategies, better understand these nuanced needs of the long-term care sector and specifically the challenges faced in adopting new technology systems, as described above. There is also a need to co-develop any IT and data strategies with residents, care team members and long-term care 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 are appropriate for the adoption of new technologies and resources made available to long-term care homes to ensure they have the capacity for adoption.

1. As policies, regulations, standards and guidelines are developed around information flow, artificial intelligence, and cyber security, the long-term care sector must be considered and included during decision-making processes.