

Position Statement | March 2026

Immigration Policy and Workforce Sustainability in Long-Term Care

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care (CALTC) advocates on behalf of Canada's long-term care (LTC) sector with a vision for a sustainable system that delivers quality care for all, ensuring residents can live and age with dignity.

Workforce sustainability is the single greatest challenge facing long-term care homes. While domestic workforce development strategies remain essential, ethical immigration policy plays a critical and immediate role in stabilizing and strengthening the LTC workforce.

Canada's immigration framework, under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)¹, is designed to advance social and economic objectives, including demographic sustainability and cooperation with provinces in workforce integration. Properly aligned with health system realities, immigration policy can strengthen long term care capacity while maintaining program integrity and public confidence.

Current Realities in Long-Term Care

Canada's demographic trajectory underscores the urgency of action:

- Canada's population aged 85 and older is projected to double by 2040.
- Current estimates indicate that nearly twice the number of LTC home spaces will be required by 2035.
- Waitlists for LTC homes are at record highs, with many individuals awaiting placement in acute care hospitals.

¹ [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#)

- The growing demand for LTC placements, has contributed to hospital over-crowding and congested emergency rooms.

Insufficient long-term care capacity has direct consequences for the broader health system. Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients occupying hospital beds due to lack of LTC placements contribute to reduced hospital efficiency, delayed surgeries, and longer wait times for care.

At the same time, workforce shortages persist:

- According to Statistics Canada, there is a growing number of vacant positions among all care team members², with nearly 25,000 vacant positions for PSWs in the long-term care sector in the third quarter of last year.
- Workforce data modernization efforts are underway nationally to strengthen planning; however, the sector's staffing needs are immediate and ongoing³.

Without targeted intervention, workforce shortages will continue to limit access to care and strain the broader health system.

The Role of Immigration in Long-Term Care

Ethical immigration for LTC workforce development is not a replacement for domestic workforce strategies but is a needed complement.

Over the last several years, federal immigration programs that have contributed meaningfully to the LTC workforce supply:

- The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFW Program) has played a critical role in stabilizing the LTC workforce⁴.
- The Atlantic Immigration Program has supported workforce recruitment in Atlantic Canada.
- The Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot has enabled LTC to recruit skilled refugees⁵.

² [Regional dynamics of vacancies in health-related occupations in Canada, 2024](#)

³ [Recent staffing and quality indicator trends in Canadian long-term care | CIHI](#)

⁴ [Temporary foreign workers in health care: Characteristics, transition to permanent residency and industry retention](#)

⁵ [Nova Scotia long-term care home recruiting refugees in Middle East, Africa to work in facility | CBC News](#)

- The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot and its successor rural initiatives have supported recruitment in smaller and remote communities.
- Express Entry category-based selection for health occupations has improved access to permanent residence for some LTC workers.

However, recent changes to several of these programs, have made it harder for LTC homes to use these programs effectively. One example is the TFW Program and the updated Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) requirements. These requirements have introduced substantial administrative and financial burdens for LTC employers, requiring annual LMIA renewals that has resulted in significant expense, time and duplication, despite the fact that long-term care workforce shortages are nationally recognized and well-documented, and the recruitment needs in LTC are broadly known. Another example is with the EMPP program⁶, which allowed LTC homes to make job offers to skilled refugees. This program was used successfully by LTC homes, but recent changes to government policy, application backlogs, and the closing of program intake in December 2025, abruptly halting an important recruitment channel.

There are also examples of skilled immigrants working successfully in LTC who have been required to leave Canada when work permits expired during prolonged permanent residence processing times. These constraints undermine retention, disrupt continuity of care, deprive residents and employers and leave experienced care providers no choice but to leave Canada—even when full-time employment remains available, and population aging is accelerating.

CALTC Position

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care acknowledges that immigration policy is subject to adjustment by the Federal government, but adjustments must be aligned with Canada’s long-term care workforce realities and the sectors need to have stable workforce development pipelines, which includes immigration. It is also recognized that it is essential that the recruitment of international healthcare professionals is be done ethically for the individual and taking steps to not recruit from countries also facing a significant workforce shortage that recruitment would undermine their own healthcare systems. As such, CALTC supports federal government’s Ethical Framework for the Recruitment and Retention of Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals in Canada⁷ and supports innovative

⁶ [Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigration-and-refugee/economic-mobility-pathways-pilot.html)

⁷ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/ethical-framework-recruitment-retention-internationally-educated-health-professionals.html>

models, such as the Global Skills Partnership established between the German and Philippine governments to specifically address concerns of “brain drain”⁸.

Within existing legislative and regulatory authorities under IRPA and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR), the federal government has tools available to implement targeted, accountable measures that support national health system sustainability.

Through ethical immigration policy that is targeted to the long term care sector, the impact can:

- Stabilize the LTC workforce
- Reduce overtime, turnover and vacancy rates
- Protect continuity of resident care
- Strengthen overall health system capacity

Immigration programs that enable recruitment and retention in LTC should be preserved, streamlined, and strengthened in a manner consistent with federal integrity safeguards and provincial workforce planning.

Recommendations

As immigration policy reforms continue, the Canadian Association for Long-Term Care (CALTC) calls on the federal government to take the following actions:

1. Preserve and Simplify Immigration Pathways for Long-Term Care

The federal government should establish a dedicated immigration pathway for long-term care (LTC), building on lessons learned from programs such as the Atlantic Immigration Program and the Home Care Worker Immigration Pilot.

A long-term care-specific model could be implemented through:

- A permanent economic class aligned with IRPR authorities, similar to the Atlantic Immigration Program; or
- A pilot program under existing ministerial authorities within IRPA.

⁸ [Hundreds of Nurses Trained Through Philippines-Germany Global Skill Partnership | Center For Global Development](#)

With respect to work permit pathways, the Francophone Mobility Program provides a regulatory precedent for occupation-specific, employer-restricted work permits aligned with clearly defined national interests. A similarly structured framework could be developed for provincially licensed LTC employers under existing IRPR authorities, including section 205 which allows LMIA exemptions where work provides significant social benefit.

In addition, the current requirement to renew Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) annually for sectors facing nationally recognized labour shortages creates significant administrative and financial burden for LTC employers.

CALTC therefore recommends the creation of a narrowly tailored LMIA-exempt work permit category for provincially licensed LTC employers, restricted to designated direct-care occupations experiencing persistent, system-wide workforce shortages, while maintaining wage parity and robust employer compliance safeguards.

CALTC therefore recommends the creation of a long term care specific immigration model that offers a clear pathway to permanent residency to support retention and long-term workforce integration, building on Home Care Immigration Pilot.

2. Prioritize Processing for Long-Term Care Workers

Processing delays that result in work permit expirations undermine workforce stability and may lead to the avoidable loss of experienced care providers. Internationally educated health professionals working in high-demand LTC occupations under temporary status require a clear, timely, and predictable pathway to permanent residency. This pathway should include a formally recognized transitional work authorization period while their applications are being processed. Existing bridging work permit mechanisms demonstrate that status stabilization during permanent residence processing is administratively feasible⁹.

Providing this stability reflects an ethical and responsible approach to internationally educated workers and enables LTC employers to plan effectively for the sustainability of their workforce.

⁹ [Some workers in Quebec are now eligible for a 12-month work permit extension | CIC News](#)

CALTC therefore recommends that immigration processing be prioritized for individuals currently employed in, or formally committed to employment in, long-term care homes across all relevant immigration streams. This includes the new *Express Entry Category-Based Selection stream for Practical Nurses and for Nurses' Aides, Orderlies and Patient Service Associates*.

CALTC recommends the formal recognition of transitional work authorization periods for immigrant employees while permanent residence applications are under review.

3. Targeted Immigration Planning and Credential Recognition for Long-Term Care

As announced in Budget 2025, the federal government will implement the Foreign Credential Recognition Action Fund in 2026 in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments.

These supports should facilitate timely credential recognition processes and include coordinated assistance for both employees and LTC employers. Targeted investment in credential recognition will help accelerate workforce integration, reduce underemployment among internationally educated professionals, and strengthen capacity within Canada's long-term care sector.

CALTC therefore recommends that targeted resources within this initiative be dedicated to internationally educated health professionals seeking employment in, or currently employed by, LTC homes.

Conclusion

Canada's immigration system must balance multiple economic and social priorities. However, long-term care represents a critical national interest tied directly to the health, dignity, and well-being of older Canadians and to the operational sustainability of the broader health system.

If Canada is to build a sustainable long-term care system, immigration policy must support—not hinder—the sector's ability to ethically recruit and retain essential workers.

Strengthening targeted and integrity-driven immigration pathways for long-term care will have an immediate and lasting impact on workforce stability, resident care quality, and the broader health system.

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