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Written Submission for the 2025 Pre-Budget Consultations

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March 10, 2025

# Recommendations

## Short Term Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** That the Government of Canada consider the impact of potential U.S. tariffs on long-term care homes, ensuring that long-term care homes are eligible for government support in the form of emergency funding programs and support to access necessary products for resident care and safety if supply chain shortages are experienced resulting in additional cost increases.

**Recommendation 2:** 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homes to apply to the MLI Select program to support access to capital financing for new builds and updating existing, outdated home infrastructure.

**Recommendation 3:** 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

**Recommendation 4:** 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.

**Recommendation 5:** That the Government of Canada offer a specific funding program as part of a National Housing Plan, that is available for long-term care home development.

**Recommendation 6:** That the Government of Canada support and scale up existing provincial and territorial housing investment programs targeted for long-term care homes.

**Recommendation 7:** That the Government of Canada consider and include the long-term care sector during decision making processes related to policies, regulations, standards and guidelines around, interoperability, artificial intelligence, and cyber security.

## Summary

Canada's long-term care sector is grappling with several complex challenges — and a new consideration is set to add further pressure across the health care system. With impending U.S. tariffs on key goods, the health care supply chain will face rising costs, directly affecting long-term care homes' operating and capital development budgets. The increased price of essential supplies to meet resident needs and build new long-term care homes will add strain to an already stretched sector.

Canada's long-term care sector (LTC) is also struggling to address two existential shortages that, at its core, define LTC; the people who provide care and the environment in which care is delivered. The majority of LTC homes are currently understaffed which is projected to worsen as the population ages at a significant rate and the number of people living with more complex social and medical needs increases. In addition, Canada's housing crisis has not spared LTC. By 2035, Canada is expected to require 454,000 long-term care home beds<sup>1</sup>, which would be a 129% increase to the 198,000 plus operating today<sup>2</sup>.

Now is the time for visionary planning and substantial investment in resources that can fundamentally transform the LTC system for the better. We must embrace a future focused strategy that includes bold initiatives in infrastructure development, workforce enhancement, and technology integration.

The following two sections detail 1) the short-term priorities, and 2) the long-term priorities for Canada's LTC sector.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/2018-11/9228\\_Meeting%20the%20Demand%20for%20Long-Term%20Care%20Beds\\_RPT.pdf](https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/2018-11/9228_Meeting%20the%20Demand%20for%20Long-Term%20Care%20Beds_RPT.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cihi.ca/en/how-many-long-term-care-beds-are-there-in-canada#:~:text=June%2010%2C%202021%20>

## Short Term Priorities

### Addressing Health Care Supply Chain Cost Increases from US Tariffs

**Recommendation:** That the Government of Canada consider the impact of US tariffs on long-term care homes, ensuring that long-term care homes are eligible for government support in the form of emergency funding programs and support to access necessary products for resident care and safety if supply chain shortages are experienced resulting in increased costs.

Canada's LTC sector must be prioritized as the country faces significant impacts from impending U.S. tariffs. These tariffs are expected to drive up costs across the health care supply chain, increasing the price of essential supplies needed to meet resident care needs— placing additional pressure on LTC homes' operating budgets.

The rising cost of building materials will further threaten the development of much needed LTC homes, compounding existing challenges such as limited access to capital financing.

As supply chains adjust to this new reality, financial support will be critical to help LTC homes absorb short-term price increases, with longer-term solutions required if tariffs become permanent.

### Infrastructure Development Solutions

**Recommendation:** 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. Fewer new homes are being built or retrofitted and the waitlist for long-term care continues to grow. 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. By allowing long-term care homes to apply to the MLI Select program it would facilitate the development and renovation of long-term care homes while enabling more projects and improvements to get off the ground and support Canada's aging population.

## 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 facilities<sup>3</sup>. 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 aging<sup>4</sup>. 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. A recent immigration pathway for homecare workers announced by IRCC<sup>5</sup> is a desired option for health care workers who are interested to work specifically in LTC, as an example of an option to support LTC home staffing needs in the short term.

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.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410032602>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220427/dq220427a-eng.htm>

<sup>5</sup> [Canada announces launch date for new permanent residence pathways for home care workers | CIC News](#)

# Long Term Priorities

## 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 providers<sup>6</sup>, a nationally recognized occupation with consistent knowledge competencies will create a defined national occupational group, that is essential to health workforce planning for LTC and the health care 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 Canada<sup>7</sup>.

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

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<sup>6</sup> [https://nos-nnp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CICan\\_NationalOccupationalStandard\\_PersonalCareProviders-2.pdf](https://nos-nnp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CICan_NationalOccupationalStandard_PersonalCareProviders-2.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://canadiancaregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CCCE\\_Caring-in-Canada.pdf](https://canadiancaregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CCCE_Caring-in-Canada.pdf)

create built-in career advancement opportunities for staff, reduce burnout through adequate staffing levels, and enhance overall working conditions<sup>8</sup>. 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:** Offer a specific funding program as part of a National Housing Plan, that is available for long-term care home development.

**Recommendation:** 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.

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 older<sup>9</sup>. To appropriately and effectively prepare for this increase in population, planning is necessary to determine future needs.

This will require a multi-jurisdictional approach between the federal and provincial and territorial governments. With the federal government's support of existing provincial and territorial investment programs, these programs can be tailored to the unique needs of each jurisdiction to ensure the greatest impact and effectiveness for residents.

We ask that the federal government provide more support and investment for infrastructure renewal and new development in LTC so that LTC homes can continue to provide safe environments and provide Canadians with the quality care and life in homes that they deserve.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/fcc/ca-en-canada-2030-senior-centric-strategy-policy-brief-aoda.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/this-is-what-canada-will-look-like-in-20-years-are-we-ready-for-an-aging-population-1.6652355>

## Infrastructure Technology Considerations

**Recommendation:** That the Government of Canada consider and include the long-term care sector during decision making processes related to policies, regulations, standards and guidelines around interoperability, artificial intelligence, and cyber security.

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 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.

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 LTC homes through improved care coordination, and communication abilities between residents and care team member<sup>10</sup>. New technologies can also improve communication between caregivers and the residents' family members. Although new technology has the potential to improve efficiencies in LTC 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 LTC 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.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10637095/>



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<sup>11</sup> 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 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.

## About CALTC

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care (CALTC) is the leading voice for quality long-term care in Canada. Working collaboratively with long-term care leaders, employees, volunteers, residents and their families, CALTC and its members share valuable insights, best practices, and evidence to continue to improve long-term care in Canada. This includes providing recommendations to the federal government, which plays a vital role in the funding and support of the sector.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://pointclickcare.com/resource/hospital-health-systems-software/ebooks-white-papers/project-amplifi-streamlining-transitions-between-care-institutions-ontario/>