



Advant**Age**
Ontario

Advancing Senior Care

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

July 2025

Federal Pre-Budget Submission 2025-26

July 2025

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. Provide COVID-style supports to provinces to ensure senior care providers such as long-term care homes, community support services and supportive housing are minimally impacted by the Trump tariff threats.**
- 2. Create a dedicated and sustainable funding stream with Ontario for seniors' care for net new initiatives, such as those outlined in the CSA and HSO National Long-Term Care Service Standards, including the new National Standard to Address Mental Health and Well-Being in Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Settings ("National Standards").**
- 3. Expand and enhance funding supports through the new Build Canada Homes to help build new and rebuild existing not-for-profit long-term care homes in Ontario and across Canada.**
- 4. Build and repair affordable supportive seniors' housing across the continuum by dedicating funding from the National Housing Strategy and other federal affordable housing funding, and financing programs specifically for seniors.**
- 5. Develop a funded national Health Human Resources (HHR) Strategy to addressing staffing issues and improve patient care.**
- 6. Exempt long-term care homes from individual Labour Market Impact Assessments to help address staff shortages and improve care.**

Background

Not-for-profit models of long-term care, including municipal and charitable homes, provide high quality care, as evidenced by many research studies, and not surprisingly are the first choice of the majority of people in Ontario waiting for a spot in long-term care. In fact, many of the elements highlighted in the National Standards reflect the leading practices already in place in many of our member homes across the province.

Our Association would like to acknowledge and applaud the federal government's recognition of the unique role that not-for-profit organizations play in the seniors' sector, shown through the inclusion of public long-term care homes as a key priority for health infrastructure spending as part of the government's platform.

This commitment and other important decisions like expanding the HST/GST rebate to Long-Term Care homes was the result of longstanding advocacy from our members and a listening ear from the federal government. We believe these are building blocks from which we can work together to further strengthen seniors' care across Canada. The reality is, however, that we need federal funding commitments and additional investment to allow improvements to materialize. It is through this lens that we provide six recommendations related to seniors' care to help seize this pivotal moment and make the promise to transform seniors' care in Canada a reality.

Overview

Relief from Potential Trade War Impacts

Recommendation #1: Provide COVID-style supports to provinces to ensure senior care providers such as long-term care homes, community support services and supportive housing are minimally impacted by the Trump tariff threats.

Dedicated Funding Stream for Long-Term Care

Recommendation #2: Create a dedicated and sustainable funding stream with Ontario for seniors' care for net new initiatives, such as those outlined in the CSA and HSO National Long-Term Care Service Standards, including the new National Standard to Address Mental Health and Well-Being in Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Settings ("National Standards").

Not-for-profit long-term care homes, including municipal and charitable, always strive to deliver the best level of care for residents. Accordingly, AdvantAge Ontario generally supports the three National Standards, which outline the current best practices in the sector. While we understand that they are voluntary, they do represent a high bar for resident quality care that our members would like the opportunity to implement. The reality is that this cannot happen without additional funding.

The federal government currently funds our sector indirectly through the Canada Health Transfer. Unfortunately, this money does not always find its way to frontline care. It is critical, therefore, that dedicated and sustainable funding be established for the long-term care sector as part of the bi-lateral agreement between the federal government and the provinces.

Such funding could be used to support emotion-focused models of care like the Butterfly and Eden models which are particularly effective for residents with dementia. Our member homes have seen a major positive impact on resident quality of life from these models as well as greater staff retention and satisfaction, and broader system savings. Providing additional funding to provinces to incentivize more homes to implement emotion-focused models of care will mean that those living with dementia and other cognitive ailments will get improved care and staffing issues will be reduced. Additionally, a core element of the new National Standard which prioritizes the emotional well-being of residents will be achieved.

In addition, dedicated and ongoing funding would help implement the standard of LTC homes having all private rooms as a minimum requirement as well as ensuring there is funding to continue to recruit and retain a wide range of healthcare professionals, including RPNs and allied health professionals. Together, this type of federal funding would have a massive impact on both improving patient care and building a sustainable healthcare sector.

Capital Funding

Recommendation #3: Expand and enhance funding supports through the new Build Canada Homes to help build new and rebuild existing not-for-profit long-term care homes in Ontario and across Canada.

The Government of Ontario needs to build 55,000 long-term care beds by 2033 to maintain the current waiting list of around 38,000, which is expected to increase over time as the number of seniors continues to grow. In addition, evidence shows seniors strongly prefer not-for-profit homes with 68% of seniors on the wait list in Ontario putting non-profit or municipal homes as their first choice. Currently, however, 58 percent of the homes are for-profit so it is clear that there is a need for more non-profit, municipal, and charitable long-term care homes in Ontario.

The unique nature of not-for-profit homes, such as having limited reserves and equity to fund these builds and the fact that most are done on a one-off basis by local community groups, means they need additional funding and financing support to complete construction. We applaud the government for including public long-term care homes as part of its priority infrastructure projects as this need has become increasingly important in recent years due to the increase in land values in many communities and the skyrocketing costs of construction labour and materials.

With the creation of the new Build Canada Homes currently underway, it will be critical that its mandate include both the construction and redevelopment of NFP long-term care homes and that they be eligible for the Mortgage Loan Insurance program under CMHC should it continue under the new entity. On that note, it will be critical that all CMHC programs disperse all funding before being wound down to ensure the current homes under construction or redevelopment can be completed. This will ensure NFP homes can secure the necessary funding so that seniors can age in the home of their choice.

Supportive Housing

Recommendation #4: Build and repair affordable supportive seniors' housing across the continuum by dedicating funding from the National Housing Strategy and other federal affordable housing funding, and financing programs specifically for seniors.

There is a lack of availability of affordable supportive housing for seniors in Ontario. This coupled with the critical shortages in long-term care beds noted above and the national housing crisis that affects people of every age, particularly seniors on a fixed income, investments in seniors' housing, including housing where supports are provided, are urgently needed and must be part of the government's focus on more housing. Currently, however, there are no federal capital funds or federal assistance provided in a targeted manner for such housing. This is a significant gap and one the National Housing Strategy is well suited to fill by providing the support needed for seniors' housing.

We understand CMHC is currently involved in long-term care financing in British Columbia and was previously involved in Ontario. We urge the government to make it part of Build Canada Homes' new mandate and to also add seniors' supportive housing as part of its mandate. The CIB should also be encouraged to leverage its resources for this effort, as part of an expanded National Housing Strategy.

Health Human Resources

Recommendation #5: Develop a funded national Health Human Resources (HHR) Strategy to addressing staffing issues and improve patient care.

Governments have taken initial steps to address the severe staffing shortages exacerbated by the pandemic; however, to date they have been piece-meal solutions and have largely focused on one profession, such as PSWs, rather than a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy to bolster the ranks throughout our health care system. Everyone in healthcare works hard, and they all deserve to be paid commensurate with their experience, with a salary that is reasonable relative to their peers.

A funded HHR strategy could also implement a key advocacy pillar of our Association, which is wage harmonization between the community health and hospital sectors. In Ontario, there is currently a \$2 billion gap in health care workers' wages in community health care and those working in hospitals despite doing similar work, and this is driving high attrition rates in community health.

Resolving this crisis will take a concerted, and coordinated effort through a national HHR strategy to improve working conditions for care providers, support training, and encourage more workers to enter seniors' care, and the health care system more broadly. This will be essential to building a stronger, more resilient health and senior care sector.

Recommendation #6: Exempt long-term care homes from individual Labour Market Impact Assessments to help address staff shortages and improve care.

Too many roadblocks for internationally trained health professionals still remain. Most notably, a home must complete a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) for each internationally trained employee position, even though the significant staff shortages are well-known in the long-term care sector and every part of the health system. This is especially an issue for NFP homes with lean administrative resources. Filling out multiple forms takes extensive staff time that could be spent on care.

The federal government recently reduced red tape for employers in the agriculture sectors by introducing the 'preferred employer' program, and we recommend that employers in healthcare settings be included in the new LMIA program by allowing organizations to submit one LMIA

that applies to all vacant positions at its facility, instead of organizations filling out an LMIA for each one.

While the federal government has committed to reducing overall immigration targets, it is imperative we continue to incentivize foreign-trained professionals for the health care sector. In Ontario alone, there will be a need for at least 59,000 more nurses and PSWs in the next five years to accommodate additional care hour investments and expanded spaces in the long-term care sector alone. There will not be enough healthcare professionals graduating from Ontario post-secondary school programs to fill this need, and increasingly homes are looking beyond Canadian borders for help. By making the LMIA process simpler and more straightforward, the federal government can help thousands of Ontarians receive high quality, frontline care.

Conclusion

Demographic shifts in Canada towards a rapidly aging population require that the seniors' sector and long-term care in particular be recognized as a national priority and in need of federal government investments and support.

By acting on the recommendations outlined above, we believe the federal government can show national leadership by making these needed investments and ensure that the seniors' sector is strengthened for generations to come. AdvantAge Ontario is always available as a willing partner to help realize this important goal.

About AdvantAge Ontario

For more than 100 years, AdvantAge Ontario has been the voice of not-for-profit seniors' care in Ontario. We represent more than 500 providers of long-term care, seniors' housing, supportive housing and community service agencies, including 98 per cent of all municipal long-term care homes and 86 per cent of all not-for-profit long-term care homes.

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