



AdvantAge
Ontario

Advancing Senior Care

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

May 2026

Federal Pre-Budget Submission 2026-27

May 2026

Summary of Recommendations

- **Recommendation #1: Create a dedicated and sustainable provincial funding stream for net new initiatives for seniors' care, such as the National Standards to Address Mental Health and Well-Being in Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Settings and others outlined in the CSA and HSO National Long-Term Care Service Standards ("National Standards").**
- **Recommendation #2: Expand and enhance funding supports through the Canada Infrastructure Bank and Build Canada Homes to help build new and rebuild existing older not-for-profit long-term care homes in Ontario and across Canada.**
- **Recommendation #3: Invest in building and repairing affordable supportive older adult housing across the continuum through dedicated funding from the National Housing Strategy and other affordable housing funding, and financing programs.**
- **Recommendation #4: Fund pre-construction costs for not-for-profit supportive housing for older adults to support organizations in their planning process.**
- **Recommendation #5: Recognize the importance of immigration to the health care workforce by exempting long-term care homes from individual Labour Market Impact Assessments to help address staff shortages and improve care.**
- **Recommendation #6: Restore longer temporary foreign worker permit durations and strengthen and simplify PR pathways for internationally trained health workers.**
- **Recommendation #7: 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 any potential Trump tariff threats.**

Background

Not-for-profit (NFP) models of long-term care (LTC), including municipal and charitable homes, provide high quality care, as evidenced by many research studies. Not surprisingly they are the first choice of the majority of people in Ontario waiting for a spot in LTC. 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, therefore, applauds the federal government's appreciation of the unique role that our members play in the older adult sector, shown through the decision to make LTC eligible for the GST/HST rebate that make NFP care more available to seniors.

This important decision was the result of longstanding advocacy from our members and a listening ear from the federal government. We believe there is more that we can do together to strengthen older adult care across Canada. It will take our collective efforts to build the high quality and robust system they deserve and sustained federal investments to allow improvements to materialize. It is through this lens that our pre-budget submission provides seven recommendations related to older adult care to help seize this pivotal moment and make the promise to transform older adult care in Canada a reality.

Dedicated Funding Stream for Long-Term Care

NFP LTC homes, including municipal and charitable homes, 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 the national standards are voluntary, they do represent a very 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 (CHT). 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 LTC sector as part of the negotiation for the new bi-lateral agreement between the federal government and Ontario, to ensure the national standards can be implemented.

For example, there is currently no broad-based public funding dedicated to emotions-based models of care, but it critical that that changes as they are proven to transform the care experience. They are particularly effective for residents with dementia. This is particularly important as almost 90% of all residents in long-term care have some form of cognitive impairment with 70% having a dementia diagnosis.

Some member homes have embraced this model and have seen positive impacts on resident quality of life, greater staff retention and satisfaction, and broader system savings. Additionally, a core element of the new National Standard which prioritizes the emotional well-being of residents will be achieved.

Also, while we agree that all private rooms are ideal for infection prevention and control as well as quality of life and addressing responsive behaviours in those with dementia, it is incredibly expensive from both a development and redevelopment perspective. Significant, additional federal capital funding would be required to help homes reach this goal.

Lastly, the federal government's implementation of a PSW tax credit is important in supporting our PSWs, but there is a significant need to increase funding across the sector to recruit and retain a wide range of healthcare professionals, including RPNs and allied health professionals. This is where federal government funding could have a massive impact on building a sustainable healthcare sector.

Capital Funding

In Ontario, 55,000 long-term care beds are planned to be built by 2033 to maintain the current waiting list of approximately 38,000, which will 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 Ontario's homes are for-profit, so it is clear that there is a need for more non-profit, municipal, and charitable LTC homes in Ontario. Recent revisions to Ontario's Long-Term Care Capital Funding Policy have strengthened support for the non-profit sector by providing more upfront funding. However, access to affordable financing remains a significant barrier, and government-backed loan guarantees are not currently available in a meaningful way for non-profit homes. The existing Build Ontario Fund threshold means most our members cannot access financing from them as their projects are too small.

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.

The federal government has various bodies, including the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) and Build Canada Homes, that provide funding for priority infrastructure projects. It is critical that CIB and Build Canada Homes' mandate be expanded to both include the construction and redevelopment of NFP long-term care homes. This will ensure NFP homes can secure the necessary funding so that older adults can age in the home of their choice.

Capital Funding

There is a lack of availability of affordable supportive housing for older adults in Ontario. Many older adults cannot afford retirement homes fees, and public home care options remain very limited. Given the critical shortages in long-term care beds noted above and the national housing crisis that affects people of every age, particularly older adults on a fixed income, investments in older adults' housing, including supportive housing, are urgently needed and must be part of the government's focus on creating more housing. The National Housing Strategy is an opportune vehicle to provide the support needed for older adults' housing.

We understand CMHC was recently involved in long-term care financing in British Columbia and was previously involved in Ontario. As their mandate transitions to Build Canada Homes, it must ensure that older adults' 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.

The other largest barrier to more NFP Long-Term Care homes and supportive housing is the upfront costs to get a project to shovel-ready status. We believe that this is an area that will see positive return on investment for the federal government; and by supporting these organizations

in the upfront planning process, there will be many more willing proponents able to bring forward creative and worthwhile proposals to build more supportive housing for older adults across the country.

Health Human Resources

People are the heart of our health care system. In recent years, this has increasingly included internationally trained health professionals. They have ensured we weathered the pandemic and ensure we can meet the 4-hour minimum care requirement that is critical to great patient care.

Despite this, too many roadblocks remain in place to attract and retain these much-needed staff which if they continue, will put patient care and our health system at risk.

In Ontario alone, there will be a need for at least 59,000 more nurses and PSWs to accommodate additional care hour investments and expanded spaces in the LTC sector in the next five years alone. There will not be enough healthcare professionals graduating from Ontario post-secondary and career college school programs to fill this need.

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 LTC sector and every part of the health system. This is especially an issue for NFP homes with lean administrative resources.

As the federal government has decreased red tape for employers in the agriculture sectors by introducing the 'preferred employer' program, we recommend that employers in healthcare settings be included as part of that program by allowing organizations to submit one LMIA that applies to all vacant positions, instead of organizations filling out an LMIA for each one. By making the LMIA process simpler and more straightforward, the federal government can help thousands of Ontarians receive high quality, frontline care.

Changes to immigration and the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) programs have caused significant recruitment and retention issues for our members across the province, in both urban and rural and remote areas. Recent federal changes to work permits, LMIA validity timelines, and residency pathways are creating instability for homes and workers and impacting resident care negatively.

On Sept 26, 2024, TFW work permits were reduced from 2 years to 1 year, and on May 1, 2024, the LMIA validity period shortened from 12 months to 6 months, requiring earlier reapplications. This has resulted in increased difficulty for health care professionals to secure permanent residency (PR) within shortened timelines. There is also uneven access to federal rural immigration pathways, with some genuinely remote communities excluded from eligibility while larger urban centres qualify, creating additional barriers for homes already facing severe recruitment challenges.

Some homes have already lost staff and others risk losing trained staff before PR applications can be completed. Shorter permits jeopardize large recruitment investments the homes have made. Rural and northern homes — who rely heavily on TFWs — face heightened risk of staffing instability. This is impacting 30 staff alone in one home in Kenora. Urban homes experience gaps when student workers complete training but cannot secure timely PR approvals.

Relief from Any Potential Trade War Impacts and Rising Fuel Prices

Finally, should there be significant impacts, the government should provide COVID-style supports to provinces to ensure older adult care providers such as LTC homes, community support services and supportive housing are minimally impacted by the Trump tariff threats and rising fuel prices.

Conclusion

Canada's rapidly aging population makes seniors' care—and long-term care in particular — a national priority requiring federal investment, support and leadership. We believe the federal government can show national leadership and investment where it is desperately needed and ensure that the seniors' sector is strengthened for generations to come.

AdvantAge Ontario is always available as a willing partner to help realize these important goals.

About AdvantAge Ontario

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

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