



<https://champlainfamilycouncils.ca>

Submission to the 2024/25 Pre-Budget Consultations of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

We are pleased that after decades of neglect, we are finally seeing much needed investment in long term care (LTC) by the provincial government - in construction and renovation of homes, training and recruitment and especially the long-awaited commitment to a minimum care standard of four hours of care/resident/day by 2024/25. And for this we are very grateful.

But we are at a turning point. Will we continue to house our frail elders in large institutional warehouses where staff are demoralized and burnt-out or do we want them to live in a true home-like environment where caring, supportive relationships between the residents, their families and staff are encouraged and nurtured? The fundamental principle of the new Fixing LTC Act is “that a long-term care home is primarily the home of its residents and is to be operated so that it is a place where they may live with dignity and in security, safety and comfort and have their physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs adequately met.” There is much work to be done to achieve this principle.

Our recommendations are grouped under five themes: staffing, person-centred care, building standards, improved quality control and accountability and achieving national standards.

1. Staffing: A system that is understaffed and relies on casual and agency staffing incurs quality control risk and vulnerability, and it is the residents who suffer.

Staffing is the number one concern of family members. Recruitment and retention remain critical challenges in the sector, especially in rural areas and the North. The increased reliance on costly agency staff because of staff vacancies means that homes are paying two and three times the hourly rate of their own employees. More importantly, residents are put at risk on a daily basis because agency staff do not know the specific needs of residents and the routine of a home. How can there be quality care when there is a revolving door of staff? Continuity of care is critical for good care. The Auditor General’s report released last month notes “homes are still struggling to maintain sufficient staff to meet the needs of

their residents.... a quarter of the homes in the province still provide fewer hours of direct care than provincial targets” and half of the homes were unable to meet the legislated standard for allied health professionals.

Homes will be challenged to reach the government’s promise to provide four hours of direct care by 2025 because of the high cost of agency staff. As well, the considerable investment by this government in recruiting and training PSWs will be wasted if newly-trained staff leave the sector.

Key recommendations:

- a) Invest in improved compensation, wage parity, benefits and working conditions to ensure staff are attracted and retained in the LTC sector.
- b) Put into place a robust **Human Health Resource Plan** that will focus on recruiting the right people to create a stable, consistent workforce that will reduce onboarding and training costs and improve job satisfaction and staff retention. The need for this plan is urgent. The plan must address the unique staffing challenges of rural and northern communities by creating a staffing strategy that addresses housing, transportation and training.
- c) Reduce the reliance on agency staff and address predatory practices by agencies that poach staff from LTC homes.
- d) Monitor the implementation of the four hours of care standard to ensure all homes meet the standard and work with those homes who do not meet the standard to address their recruitment and retention issues.
- e) Implement the outstanding recommendations from the 2020 Staffing Studies, COVID-19 LTC Commission and 2023 Auditor-General’s Report Audit *“Long-Term Care Homes: Delivery of Resident-Centred Care”*, especially the recommendation to increase care by allied health professionals from 36 minutes to 60 minutes per day.
- f) Create a provincial campaign to change the image of long-term care for the public and for potential employees so it is no longer a place to be feared or avoided.
- g) Develop consistent standards for PSW education and on-the-job training, especially in dementia and palliative care to ensure quality resident care. Funding should be provided to back-fill positions when training is provided.

2. *Person-centred care: There must be a fundamental shift away from an institutional, task-oriented model to one that is properly funded and puts the needs and preferences of residents at the focus of care.*

We believe that, given the will, your government is in a unique position to transform and rebuild our long-term sector on the tenets outlined in the preamble to the new Fixing LTC Act - on a person-centred model of care that promotes quality of life and quality of care for the residents and attracts, supports and retains all levels of staff. Widespread

implementation of person-centred care, however, will require resolution of the staffing crisis and investments in training, as well as sharing and promotion of best practices. The investment, however, will pay big dividends: a more dignified life for residents, better health outcomes and a work environment and culture that attracts and retains staff.

Many homes in the Champlain region have already begun to implement person-centred models of care, as have the municipal homes in the City of Toronto. But person-centred care must be adopted as the standard for all homes across Ontario with appropriate funding provided for its widespread implementation. Additional funding to achieve this transformation could be available by working with the federal government on the implementation of the new national standard.

Key Recommendations:

- a) The Ministry and LTC leadership immediately embrace, fund and make real progress on implementing a person-centred model of care which is built on respect, kindness, compassion and dignity for the resident.
- b) Implement the Quality Centre mentioned in the Fixing LTC Act to act as the driver for the move to person-centred care through the sharing of best practices and coaching homes.
- c) Investigate the Auditor-General's recommendation that young persons in LTC could be better supported. The Ministry should work with the homes and other Ministries to assess whether there are more suitable living options for younger residents which would provide them with person-centred care that is appropriate to their age and interests.
- d) Review the care standard of four hours to determine whether four hours is adequate to address the complex care needs of today's residents.

3. Building standards: We do not need any more large, sterile institutions with shared rooms and bathrooms that don't feel anything like a home.

Adopting person-centred care as the model of care requires modifications to the existing, outdated building standard for LTC homes in order to create smaller, home-like environments that provide privacy, foster a sense of community, include space for indoor and outdoor activities and are also more functional for staff in provision of care.

Many of the new LTC buildings look more like prisons than homes, and many are built where land is cheap on the outskirts along busy streets filled with strip malls and inadequate public transportation. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see LTC homes co-located with community centres or day care centres? Could the government find a partner and

build a LTC home similar to what is being built in British Columbia? *Providence Living Place* will be BC's first publicly funded long-term care home based on the concepts of a dementia village. *If BC can do it, why can't Ontario?*

Key Recommendations:

- a) Revise current building standards to create smaller home-like environments that support and promote person-centred care.
- b) Adopt the requirement for private rooms with ensuite bathrooms in all new and renovated LTC homes.
- c) Build homes within the context of a provincial plan based on needs and community profiles (cultural diversity, location) especially the needs of underserved populations such as LGBTQ+ and Indigenous communities.
- d) Non-profit ownership should be favoured when awarding licenses and construction funding.
- e) Encourage the development of campuses of care which incorporate independent living apartments and assisted living residences to encourage sharing of services and resources; remove barriers that prevent residents from moving between different types of residences within the same campus (e.g from assisted living to long-term care).

4. Quality Control, Accountability and Transparency: Quality control, improvement and preparedness in LTC homes is not achievable without clearly understood requirements, coaching for compliance and accountability that is enforced by robust oversight.

Families want a robust inspection program that can function during a health crisis to protect LTC residents, guarantees that every LTC home in Ontario is fully inspected on an annual basis, ensures that homes understand requirements and promotes a culture of proactive quality control and improvement for meeting and maintaining those requirements.

Weaknesses in the system were identified for years prior to the pandemic, and the 2023 Ontario Ombudsman's report on the LTC inspection system outlined the inability of the Ministry to protect LTC home residents during the first wave of the pandemic. While efforts have been made to make LTC homes more accountable, only regular oversight, inspection system preparedness, coaching and impactful enforcement consequences will make accountability a reality.

Nearly everything that happens in LTC is documented and counted but we lack performance measures on what really matters: quality of life for the residents and a supportive working environment for staff. The new Fixing LTC Act speaks of quality improvement but there is little guidance on how that can be achieved.

Key Recommendations:

The inspection regime, and the LTC Quality Inspection Program (LQIP) must:

- a) Strike a balance between a strong inspection regime but allow homes the room to innovate and try new approaches that improve the lives of their residents;
- b) Have at its core, coaching for compliance and sharing of best practices to help poorly performing homes;
- c) Review and revise current performance indicators with stakeholders (including families) to ensure a focus on quality of life for residents as well as quality of care;
- d) Ensure that performance metrics be publicly available by home. Published inspection reports should be clear, comprehensible and accurately reflect corrective actions with timelines for action;
- e) Review and revise the burden of reporting so administrators and front-line staff can focus on improving the lives of residents, and;
- f) Require public reporting of direct hours of care for each individual home, currently hidden in an average taken across all homes in the province.

5. Achieve National Standards: Transformational change and resolution of long-standing systemic failures in long-term care can only be achieved through improved provincial requirements that reflect national standards, and which define person-centred care as the foundation for long-term care.

While a minority of LTC homes, primarily not-for-profit LTC homes, have been able to take steps towards improved quality and person-centred care, many family members and friends of residents that support their loved ones in LTC will dispute that the delivery of care in Ontario's LTC homes is person-centred and already meets national LTC standards.

Key Recommendations:

- a) The Ministry must work with the federal government on the implementation of the recently developed LTC standards developed by LTC experts through widespread consultation with caregivers and members of the public.
- b) With the federal government, implement data collection and monitoring systems to promote sharing of accurate, meaningful data that can be used to assess the needs of an aging population and allow governments to develop appropriate plans to meet the demand for home care, long-term care and innovative seniors housing solutions such as NORC-SSPs which promote healthy aging-in-place.

In Closing:

The roadmap for long-term care reform and transformation has already been provided by the many, many studies of LTC, most recently the new national LTC standards, the 2023

Auditor General’s report, the COVID-19 Commission Report and the two 2020 staffing studies. These studies are based on widespread consultation with residents, families, staff, and experts who want to see long-term care rebuilt on a foundation of compassion, dignity and respect for the residents and all those who provide their care.

LTC is more than just buildings – it should be about assuring that the residents have the best possible quality of life during their remaining days. We need a commitment from government to make LTC care *“a better place to live, and a better place to work”* to quote from the 2020 LTC Staffing Study. Residents, their families and staff can’t wait any longer.

Submitted by:

Champlain Region Family Council Network

Email: crfcnottawa@gmail.com

Website: champlainfamilycouncils.ca / X: [@CRFCN_Champlain](https://twitter.com/CRFCN_Champlain)

January 31, 2024