



Time is Running Out: Investing Now to Meet the Care Needs of Ontario's Seniors

2024-25 Provincial Pre-Budget Priorities and Recommendations



In a Leger poll, when asked about health spending priorities, the **majority** of Ontario respondents chose improving seniors' care, including more long-term care homes, as their **number one** priority.



AdvantAge Ontario believes that increased funding in the next provincial budget should focus on four critical areas:

- > Health human resources
- > Long-term care level of care funding
- > Long-term care capital development
- > Assisted living in seniors' supportive housing

In our submission, Time is Running Out: Investing Now to Meet the Care Needs of Ontario's Seniors, we have put forward 21 recommendations (listed on the next page) and of those the following are our top priorities in the above noted areas:

Address the health workforce crisis.

Make targeted investments to support wages that will attract and retain staff:

- > Increases in wages for workers in long-term care and community care to address the impact of inflation as well as Bill 124 wage reopeners costs beyond just those organizations that were covered under the Bill.
- > Multi-year funding for wage harmonization so that that all health care workers – including long-term care, homecare, and community support services – match those that similarly qualified workers are receiving in hospitals and other settings.

Increase funding to keep pace with rising costs.

Ensure sufficient and stable operating funding to support high quality, sustainable long-term care:

- > One-time catch-up increase of 10% in all level of care (LOC) funding envelopes.

Enhance capital development support for not-for-profit providers.

Address the unique circumstances facing not-for-profit, municipal and charitable homes that are undertaking capital projects to enable them to build/rebuild:

- > Provide zero interest rate construction financing for long-term care home capital re/development through the Ontario Infrastructure Bank and increase the base construction funding subsidy (CFS) per-diem by at least \$45.00 per bed.

Strengthen support for aging in place.

Increase investments to build capacity in the community and address the lack of options in the continuum of seniors' care:

- > Invest in the expansion of Assisted Living in Seniors' Supportive Housing programs across the province by implementing a separate stream of both capital and operating funding for supportive housing for seniors and intergenerational supportive housing, in addition to the funding received for other groups (i.e. unhoused and Indigenous population).

Summary of Recommendations

Health Human Resources

Recommendation 1:

Increases in wages for health care workers in long-term care and community care, to address the impact of inflation as well as Bill 124 wage reopeners affecting the entire sector, beyond just those organizations that were covered under the Bill.

Cost estimate: An increase of \$309 million in the Nursing and Personal Care (NPC) envelope of the level of care (LOC) funding.

Recommendation 2:

Ensure that all organizations affected by Bill 124 are fully compensated for its ongoing impacts.

Recommendation 3:

Multi-year funding to work towards wage harmonization so that all health care workers, including long-term care, home care, and community support services, match those that similarly qualified workers are receiving in hospitals and other settings.

Cost estimate: As per the *Ontario Community Health Market Salary Review Report*, more than \$2 billion or around \$490 million dollars annually over five years.

Recommendation 4:

Funding should be made available so that all health care workers are offered access to similar benefits as hospital workers or municipal workers, including pensions.

Recommendation 5:

A separate and distinct strategy needs to be developed and fully funded for rural and northern communities that face added challenges in attracting and retaining staff.

Recommendation 6:

Funding for homes to cover the costs of bringing on international staff.

Cost estimate: \$4,500 to \$10,000 per person recruited.

Recommendation 7:

Training and education funding for staffing supports, including funding for a nurse educator position in each home and further investments in proven programs for high demand positions, such as food service workers.

Level of Care

Recommendation 8:

One-time catch-up increase of 10% in all LOC funding envelopes.

Cost estimate: \$570 million, including the \$309 million for wage increases.

Recommendation 9:

All LOC envelopes to be indexed to inflation moving forward, after the 2024-25 increases.

Capital Development

Recommendation 10:

Provide zero interest rate construction financing through the Ontario Infrastructure Bank for developing and redeveloping long-term care homes.

Recommendation 11:

Increase of the base per-diem of CFS by a top-up of at least \$45 per bed. The supplementary funding should include the flexibility of converting \$20 in \$2.5 increments into an upfront equity for not-for-profit long-term care homes.

Recommendation 12:

Provide upfront funding of up to \$250,000 to not-for-profit long-term care homes and increase the planning grant for not-for-profit long-term care homes to \$500,000 from \$250,000.

Recommendation 13:

Develop a dedicated funding model or incorporate a rural and northern component into the existing funding policy for rural homes.

Recommendation 14:

Make ELDCAP beds serving rural and northern Ontario eligible for the Construction Funding Subsidy.

Recommendation 15:

Provide a funding supplement to long-term care homes under construction under the occupancy reduction policy. This is a critical measure to enable homes to redevelop, without which a number of projects will not be viable.

Recommendation 16:

Allocate surplus government lands to not-for-profit long-term care homes.

Recommendation 17:

Formulate a specialized strategy and funding for Toronto's long-term care homes, addressing their unique obstacles stemming from constrained (re)development space, smaller land parcels, and ensuing operational complexities.

Recommendation 18:

Redistribute the development funding grant in the early stages of the project so that long-term care homes can have more upfront funding.

Assisted Living in Supportive Housing

Recommendation 19:

Invest in the expansion of Assisted Living in Seniors' Supportive Housing programs across the province by implementing a separate stream of both capital and operating funding for supportive housing for seniors and intergenerational supportive housing, in addition to the funding received for other groups (i.e., unhoused and Indigenous populations).

Recommendation 20:

A 5% (\$35 million) increase in funding for existing operators of seniors' supportive and assisted living housing to help them sustain existing service levels for current clients to address the significantly decreased viability of these programs due to the sustained lack of increases over time.

Recommendation 21:

Providing funding for a navigator in existing not-for-profit seniors' housing buildings to connect residents to social and health services.