

Meeting Kit and Speaking Points

Federal Retirees members are advocacy leaders on issues important to older adults, including implementing a national seniors strategy and ensuring better retirement income security for all Canadians.

Federal Retirees has long advocated for improvements to long-term and home care, and COVID-19 emphasized the urgent need for these reforms. In fact, in a survey we conducted on older adult care, 81 per cent of members responded that Canada should implement a national framework for long-term care and 80 per cent responded that the same should be done for home care.

In early 2023, CSA Group and the Health Standards Organization (HSO) published Canada's standards on long-term care — but they're still not mandatory, which means long-term care residents are still at risk.

As part of our national advocacy campaign on long-term care — which calls for long-term care standards to be implemented and enforced through accountability tied to funding — Federal Retirees' volunteers and members are encouraged to participate in our advocacy efforts by setting up meetings with their member of Parliament (MP) and other local representatives to discuss our campaign.

SETTING UP, PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING A MEETING

For information on the steps to take to set up, prepare for and conduct a meeting with your MP or another local representative, refer to our [Reach 338 training package](#), found on federalretirees.ca or in the [Volunteer Information Portal](#).

Having trouble finding the Reach 338 tools, templates and training package? Email advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca for assistance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON OLDER ADULT CARE IN CANADA

Some facts about responsibilities for health care in Canada

- Health care is a shared responsibility between the provincial and territorial governments and the federal government.
- The provincial and territorial governments are responsible for the management, organization and delivery of health care services for their residents.
- The federal government's role includes:
 - Supporting the delivery of health care services for some population groups, including veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and Indigenous people.
 - Setting and administering national standards for the health care system (through the [Canada Health Act](#)).
 - Providing funding support for provincial and territorial health care services (through the [Canada Health Transfer](#)).

Some facts about older adults in Canada

- By 2030, adults aged 65 and older will make up 23 per cent of Canada's population and number over 9.5 million. This makes older adults the fastest-growing segment of the population.
- Today, with Canadians' average life expectancy estimated at 80 years, physicians believe Canadians who reach age 65 without major complications can realistically look forward to 20 more years of life, 17 of them in good health.



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- Women account for approximately 55 per cent of seniors aged 65 and older and for approximately 61 per cent of those 80 years and older.
- Older Canadians overwhelmingly want to age with dignity and autonomy in their homes and communities, and with appropriate care and support for themselves and their families.
- **Some facts about long-term care and home care in Canada¹**
 - In 2018 it was estimated that more than 430,000 adult Canadians have unmet home care needs, while more than 40,000 Canadians are on wait lists for long-term care homes due, in part, to a lack of available home and community-based care.²
 - It is estimated that by 2035 an additional 199,000 long-term care beds will be needed to accommodate new demand, which is nearly double the number of beds we had in 2017.³
 - Research conducted by the National Institute on Ageing indicates that between 2019 and 2050, the cost of public care in long-term care homes (24/7 hour care) and private residences (rented or owned single, detached or multiple units) is expected to more than triple, rising from \$22 billion to \$71 billion annually (in constant 2019 dollars).⁴
 - While government spending on the provision of long-term care is increasing across Canada, it has not kept pace with the spending of most other Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries.⁵
 - With no established national standards for long-term and home care, there exists a patchwork of programs and services, with variations in the types of services, availability of services, level of public funding, eligibility criteria, and out-of-pocket costs.
 - Public spending on long-term and home care can be difficult to quantify due to the patchwork system in place for these types of care. However, we know that long-term and home care needs will increase over the coming years – all the more reason to ensure government spending on long-term and home care is part of a comprehensive national plan that addresses Canadians’ needs.
 - More than 80 per cent of Canada’s total COVID-19 deaths occurred in long-term care during the first wave of the pandemic. Over 17,000 long-term care residents died of COVID-19 in Canada. Some of the factors that contributed to this tragic result include a lack of preparation (e.g. shortages of personal protective equipment and delays in implementing infection control measures), underfunding, staff shortages, inadequate training, poor working conditions for staff and years of neglect — likely attributable to ageism — by governments responsible for regulating and overseeing these facilities. In 2021 the federal government committed to introducing Canada’s Safe Long-Term Care Act, but the legislation has not been introduced yet.

SPEAKING POINTS FOR MEETINGS WITH YOUR MP OR OTHER REPRESENTATIVE

When you meet with your MP or another local representative, you can use the information and statements below (in addition to the facts above) to guide your conversation.

Introductory remarks

- I am a constituent of this riding, [*riding name*], and a member of the National Association of Federal Retirees, an organization representing more than 170,000 active and retired members of the federal public service, Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP and retired federally appointed judges, as well as their partners and survivors.
- I have asked to meet with you today to discuss my concerns about long-term care and home care, and the need for national standards for long-term care to be implemented and enforced through accountability tied to funding.
- Federal Retirees was pleased to see the recent release of [national standards for long-term care](#) by the federal government,



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and to see our members' feedback reflected in the final report. We were also impressed by the quality of work done by the Health Standards Organization, building on groundwork done by the Canadian Standards Association.

- However, there is still work to be done. The standards are voluntary, and this is a problem. Enforceability and regulation, while difficult in a federal system, are needed to make a real difference.
- Additionally, the federal government committed to developing and implementing a Safe Long-Term Care Act in 2021 — but there's been no action on that so far.
- And so, we are continuing to campaign for the national long-term care standards to be implemented, with funding and accountability.

Why I'm worried about long-term care and home care in Canada:

- Long-term care and home care have been largely ignored by governments in Canada, from both a policy and funding standpoint. This has led to an underfunded patchwork system of care that depends on where you live and, in many cases, your ability to afford services.
- This lack of policy and funding has resulted in several issues, including long wait times to access long-term and home care, insufficient and inconsistent quality of care for those that rely on these forms of care, and unacceptable conditions in our long-term care facilities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed long-standing issues in older adult care and particularly in long-term care — and the pandemic and its effects are not yet over. Older adults were disproportionately affected by COVID-19, with those aged 60 and older accounting for more than 30 per cent of cases as of early September 2020. Research also shows that during the first wave of the pandemic more than 80 per cent of COVID-19 deaths in Canada occurred in long-term care facilities.⁶
- Long-term care is delivered by various providers, including for-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. Delivering social services to vulnerable populations is not a typical business: long-term care providers need to be held accountable for the standard of care they provide.
- Our current approach to older adult care fails to consider the wishes of those receiving care, as well as their families and caregivers. Most significantly, it ignores that older adults overwhelmingly wish to age with dignity and autonomy at home, with appropriate care and support for themselves and their families.
- Our healthcare system focuses heavily on providing care for older adults in institutional settings, like long-term care facilities. This ignores the many benefits of home and community care, like the fact that it is less costly to provide, allows older adults to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible and generally leads to better health outcomes and quality of life.⁷

Why we need national standards for long-term and home care in Canada:

- The number of older adults is increasing across Canada and by the end of this decade, those aged 65 and older will make up 23 per cent of the population.
- More Canadians are living with chronic conditions and diseases, especially as we age. This means increasing demand for health care services, especially those that older adults rely on like long-term care and home care.
- The legal and policy frameworks of health care and health care funding must adapt to keep pace with Canada's changing demographics. We need to structure and manage older adult care, like long-term care and home care, in the same way we



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structure and manage other areas of the healthcare system, like hospitals and physicians: with national standards tied to funding.

- For your federal representative: National standards implemented and enforced through accountability tied to funding would incentivize provincial and territorial governments – and ultimately care providers – to improve long-term care. The long-promised Safe Long-Term Care Act could provide part of a legislative framework for this.
- For your provincial/territorial representative: National standards tied to funding could support increasing funding for provinces and territories to deliver these services in a way that ensures standards are being met and help them deal with increasing health care demands.
- Research and experience in Canada and abroad have shown that home care leads to better health outcomes and quality of life for older adults and helps health-care dollars stretch further and more effectively. It allows older adults to remain independent and to continue to be active members of their communities and economies. However, encouraging home care should not be done at the expense of caregivers; it should also mean greater financial and structural support for them.
- Some people will still need to rely on the care provided in long-term care facilities, so it is vital that improvements be made to long-term care and that the number of available beds keeps up with increasing demand.
- The availability, type and quality of services in both home care and long-term care should not depend on an individual's postal code or ability to pay. It is crucial that national standards tied to funding be implemented so that all Canadians can access quality health care and age with dignity.
- Simply put, older adults deserve better: better quality of care, better quality of life, better access, better oversight, better staffing and working conditions and better infrastructure.

FEDERAL RETIREES' POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Implement national long-term care standards and ensure they are enforced with accountability tied to funding. These standards would:

- Replace an underfunded patchwork system of care with a comprehensive and coherent set of standards to deliver high quality and accessible home care and long-term care services to all older Canadians from coast to coast to coast.
- Be part of a wider national seniors strategy and its principle for a continuum of care, from better integration in the community to better transition from home care to long-term care.
- Be implemented in collaboration with all levels of government with standards, criteria and inspections tied to provincial funding and federal transfers.
- Mitigate the chronic issues that have plagued the sector for years: obsolete facility designs, low levels of staffing per resident, low care time per resident, poor working conditions and very low wages, low levels of regulated staff, high levels of casual staff working at multiple locations, usage of staffing agencies, low levels of specialists per facility and overcrowding.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

If you have the opportunity to ask a representative a question, whether it be in a conversation with them or while attending an event like a town hall, don't be shy! We've prepared some questions to help you start important discussions.

- Older adults have different needs at different stages of life. Most people want to age at home and in their communities



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but require support to do so. The long-standing issues with long-term care highlighted by COVID-19 have only intensified peoples' desire to age at home. How will your government/party improve older adult care and ensure comprehensive, timely and quality long-term care and home and community care?

- For **federal representatives**: Do you support implementing national standards for long-term care and ensuring funding is dependent on meeting those standards?
 - If yes, what are you/your government/your party doing to push for their implementation and enforcement through accountability tied to funding?
 - If no, why not? What is your solution for the issues we know exist with long-term and home care?
- For **provincial/territorial representatives**: Do you support the implementation of national standards with funding that is dependent on meeting those standards to ensure accountability for long-term?
 - If yes, what are you/your government/your party doing to push for their implementation? Are you willing to work with the federal government and other provinces/territories to implement national standards?
 - If no, why not? What is your solution for the issues we know exist with long-term and home care?

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- 1 For clarity on what we mean when we use the terms “long-term care” and “home care”, see our web article about older adult care terms.
 - 2 See the National Institute on Ageing’s report Enabling the Future Provision of Long-Term Care in Canada.
 - 3 See the Conference Board of Canada’s report Sizing Up the Challenge: Meeting the Demand for Long-Term Care in Canada.
 - 4 See the National Institute on Ageing’s report The Future Co\$t of Long-Term Care in Canada.
 - 5 See the OECD’s data on long-term care.
 - 6 See the Canadian Institute for Health Information’s report Pandemic Experience in the Long-Term Care Sector: How Does Canada Compare With Other Countries?.
 - 7 See research article Comparative Costs of Home Care and Residential Care.
 - 8 See the Canadian Frailty Network’s report Frailty and Ageing: Canadian challenges and lessons learned in Denmark.



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