



OLTCA

Leading Change. Together.

PROTECTING ONTARIO'S PROGRESS

LTC at the Heart of Aging Well in Every Community

Budget Submission

2026





MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR AGING COMMUNITIES

Ontario's population is aging rapidly, with the number of people over 80 growing almost 4 times faster than any other age group. As people live longer, often with multiple chronic conditions, cognitive challenges, and complex support needs, Ontario must ensure that seniors can age well, safely, and with dignity in the communities they helped build.

Long-term care (LTC) plays an essential role in the continuum of living and health care. Every year, long-term care homes support more than 77,500 Ontarians who call LTC home, as well as those living in the community who need respite stays, short-stay transitions, and community programs.

Ontario's 600+ LTC homes are not simply health providers. They are places where people live; where residents' families are supported throughout a loved one's aging journey; and where more than 87,000 staff build meaningful, purpose-driven careers.





ONTARIO'S LONG-TERM CARE HOMES ARE LEADERS IN INNOVATIVE QUALITY CARE, BOTH WITHIN CANADA AND GLOBALLY

Ontario has taken historic steps to support long-term care and help residents live with dignity and purpose.

The commitment to four hours of direct care, the largest long-term care capital program in Ontario's history, transformative investments to grow the workforce, and a continued focus on quality strengthen the ability of homes to meet their populations' needs. Residents, families, and care teams feel the impact of these changes every day.

Budget 2026 will be critical to protect and build on this progress.

While much has been achieved, the province must safeguard this progress and continue to build a future where Ontarians can age well in their communities with supports that evolve with their needs.



ONTARIO'S TRANSFORMATION OF LONG-TERM CARE

This government's achievements are not abstract; they are reshaping seniors' care, building affordable seniors housing, and directly improving the daily lives of the people who live and work in long-term care.

In particular, Ontario has made four transformational advances that are redefining what it means to age well in this province:

Achieving Four Hours of Direct Care for Residents

Ontario's commitment to an average of four hours of direct care per resident per day has been transformative. Residents now receive increased care and hands-on support, while families experience stronger involvement and connections.

Most importantly, homes are better prepared to meet growing clinical complexities.

Expanding and Modernizing LTC Capacity Across the Province

Ontario's monumental long-term care expansion of 30,000 new spaces and 28,000 modernized spaces is critical to meeting the needs of our aging population. Through adaptive policy and strong partnerships with homes, the province has advanced 151 home projects, representing over 24,600 spaces for Ontario's most vulnerable to live.

Beyond infrastructure, LTC is the foundation of age-friendly communities that enable seniors to stay close to home.



Building a Modern Workforce that Can Grow in LTC

Long-term care is a unique and deeply meaningful place to build a health care career, where professionals support not only clinical needs but also purposeful living.

Thanks to the government's staffing investments, LTC is gradually being viewed as a first-choice career path for new graduates. Innovative models like the Living Classroom and PREP LTC bring learners directly into homes, while bridging and laddering programs such as BEGIN help current staff enhance their skills and advance their careers.

Ontario is building a workforce that can grow with the aging population to support the sector and adapt to community needs.

Strengthening LTC as a Place to Live Well

Quality of life, excellence in care and purposeful living remain at the centre of long-term care. Investments in expanded behavioural supports for people living with dementia, medication safety, and information technology are improving lives.

New initiatives such as the Community Paramedicine Program, the Improving Dementia Care Program and Community Access to Long-Term Care are reshaping the care and support seniors can receive in long-term care homes and in their communities.

This is a foundational transformation worth protecting. Yet without continued focus and sustained investment, we risk undermining gains Ontario has worked so hard to achieve.



THE RISK OF LOSING GROUND

Despite the progress made, homes continue to face significant pressures that threaten the gains achieved so far.

Maintaining Four Hours of Care

Homes have worked hard to exceed the four hours of direct care target. But rising costs, growing wage and benefit pressures driven by arbitrated awards, and ongoing health human resource shortages mean many homes across Ontario will struggle to sustain these staffing levels.

For 2026-27, homes will need a 5.6% increase in funding to maintain hours of care and operations.

Aging Infrastructure and Older Homes

Over 200 homes are operating in aging buildings that are increasingly costly to maintain, even as they continue to serve those in need in their communities.

The capital program has helped, but many homes still face uncertainty about their redevelopment path and whether they can keep their spaces open in the meantime.



Staffing and Workforce Sustainability

The sector faces intense competition for Medical Directors, Attending Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Registered Practical Nurses, PSWs, Dietitians, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and other health care workers. By 2029, Ontario will need over 25,400 nurses and personal support workers to deliver four hours of care for residents in existing and new spaces.

While recent announcements such as the expansion of Living Classrooms and nursing mentorship programs are welcome alongside existing programs like PREP LTC, they must be supported by flexible, modern care models that enable staff to work to their full capacity and in healthy work environments so homes can recruit, retain, and grow their teams for the long term.

Innovation and a Culture of Quality

Homes are advancing emotion-focused care, Community Access to Long-Term Care and other innovative models that bring services closer to people and better meet the needs of those living in our aging communities.

To sustain and scale this work, homes need a strong culture of innovation and continuous quality improvement, supported by technology, modern staffing models, and regulatory frameworks built on a just-culture approach.

BUDGET 2026: PRIORITIES TO PROTECT LONG-TERM CARE TRANSFORMATION

Budget 2026 is a critical moment to protect what has been built, ensuring homes have the staff, infrastructure and support to create the conditions for continued innovation and improvement.

Priority 1

Protecting Time for Care: Sustaining the Four-Hour Direct Care Commitment

Ontario's commitment to reach an average of four hours of direct care per resident per day is one of the most significant investments made to long-term care.

It is already changing the daily lives of residents and staff, allowing more time for hands-on care and meaningful connections. To maintain this commitment, homes must maintain staffing levels amongst arbitrated wage settlements.

This is particularly true in small, rural and northern communities where long-term care is essential and yet increasing costs and additional operating pressures are making it difficult to meet residents' growing needs and maintain staffing.

To sustain and spread this work, homes need to be enabled to build a culture of innovation and continuous quality improvement backed by technology, modern staffing models, flexible funding policies and regulatory frameworks aligned with a just-culture approach.

In Budget 2026, we recommend that Ontario:

- Increase the level of care and direct care funding to protect care hours.
- Support small, rural and northern communities' LTC homes through an annual grant and protect ward bed funding.
- Enable greater funding flexibility to meet care needs.

These steps will protect the four hours of care commitment, stabilize staffing and home operations, and reinforce our homes' abilities and families' confidence that their loved ones will receive the care they've been promised.

Priority 2

Protecting Communities: Maintaining Older Homes and Securing a Path to Redevelopment

Older homes remain at the heart of many Ontario communities. They support local seniors, are major employers, and serve as a vital bridge between hospitals, primary care, and community services.

As the need for more long-term care accelerates, the province has rightly focused on getting more projects underway through the 2025 LTC Home Capital Funding Program and additional financing tools.

However, in many regions, such as small, rural communities and in the GTHA, the program still falls short. This leaves many homes still operating in aging buildings with significant capital needs just to remain open.

Protecting Ontario means ensuring these homes can remain open safely while they work toward redevelopment. Keeping homes open prevents resident displacement and protects community access to care, jobs, and local economic activity.

Long-term care homes support more than \$12.4 billion in GDP, \$9.3 billion in labour income, and over 166,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs across Ontario.

Indeed, with the largest growth in the seniors population projected in 2027, the need is urgent. Ontario must accelerate its capital program to keep pace.

The province will need to achieve its commitment to add 30,000 additional spaces by 2029 to maintain system capacity, and even then, the broader health system will continue to face significant pressure.

In Budget 2026, we recommend that Ontario:

- Maintain operating viability for older homes while they work to redevelop.
- Optimize the new Capital Funding Program and develop specialized solutions for the 200 homes left to redevelop.
- Expand access to critical minor capital funding to ensure existing homes can stay open.

By protecting existing homes and creating clear, predictable pathways to redevelopment, the province can protect local access to care, preserve affordable housing for seniors, and deliver on its commitment to build modern, comfortable, and safe environments.

Priority 3

Protecting the Workforce: Ensuring We Have Enough Staff

Ontario's long-term care transformation will succeed or fail based on whether homes have sufficient staffing, flexibility and availability to support healthy work environments.

The province has already made significant investments in workforce growth – including dedicated funding for additional staff, tuition and incentive programs for PSWs and nurses, and targeted recruitment and retention strategies in long-term care.

To protect this progress, Budget 2026 should focus on workforce sustainability and stability:

- Making long-term care an attractive, stable, and rewarding place to build a career.
- Supporting leadership, mentorship, and professional development for staff at all levels.
- Supporting teams to manage growing resident complexity, mental health and behavioural needs, and palliative care.

In Budget 2026, we recommend that Ontario:

- Expand investments and initiatives to grow and develop Ontario's workforce, including supporting homes in recruitment and retention.
- Enable staff to work to their full scope of practice.
- Continue innovative care supports.

Investing in the people who work in long-term care not only helps attract and retain staff, but also benefits residents, supports families and care partners, and protects Ontario's broader health system from cascading pressures.

Priority 4

Protecting Innovation: Advancing a Culture of Quality

Across Ontario, long-term care homes are using innovative models that reflect the increasing needs of residents and our shared vision for aging well.

Emotion-focused dementia care, Community Access to Long-Term Care, seniors hubs, and culturally and religiously specific homes are improving quality of life, supporting families, and easing pressure on hospitals.

These models help people live well and keep seniors connected to their communities.

To sustain this work, Ontario needs a culture of quality in long-term care, not a punitive inspection system. Modern compliance must support learning, psychological safety, and continuous improvement while maintaining accountability and transparency.

Scaling innovation requires technology-enabled tools, modern staffing models, and regulatory frameworks that support just-culture principles.

Homes and inspectors need a shared, evidence-based foundation that prioritizes resident outcomes, uses data effectively, and includes the voices of residents, families, and care partners

Most importantly, Ontario should advance an inspection approach that shifts away from fault-finding toward quality improvement and excellence in care—recognizing effective practice, supporting continuous learning, and fostering a culture in which residents come first.

In Budget 2026, we recommend that Ontario:

- Support and foster a culture of quality improvement.
- Build additional supports for new models of care.
- Enhance access to campuses of care and culturally specific homes.
- Continue technological investments.

By protecting innovation and strengthening a culture of quality improvement, the government can ensure long-term care continues to evolve alongside Ontario's changing population, supporting aging well, living well, and delivering care that reflects what residents and families value most.



CONCLUSION

Ontario has made significant progress in transforming long-term care. The commitments to four hours of care, thousands of new and redeveloped spaces, and a more resilient workforce are already making a difference in the lives of residents, families, and care partners across the province.

At the same time, we know there is more work to do. Demographic pressures, rising complexity, and ongoing workforce challenges mean that the system remains fragile.

Without deliberate action, there is a real risk of losing hard-won gains.

Budget 2026 is a chance to protect Ontario by protecting long-term care:

- Protecting residents' access to four hours of direct care.
- Protecting communities by keeping homes open and ensuring a path to modern, redeveloped spaces.

- Protecting staff by making long-term care a place where people can build rewarding careers; and
- Protecting innovation by enabling a culture of quality.

The Ontario Long Term Care Association and our members are committed to working with the government to deliver on these goals.

Together, we can protect Ontario's progress, honour the people who built this province, and ensure that every person who calls long-term care home receives the safe, high-quality, and compassionate care they deserve – today and for generations to come.



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About the OLTCA

The Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA) is the province's largest representative of long-term care providers, including private, not-for-profit, municipal, hospital, culturally specific, and First Nations homes in rural, urban, and Northern locations across the province. Our members deliver care and support in 70% of Ontario's long-term care homes. We advocate for data-informed solutions that improve quality of life, strengthen care, and ensure seniors have access to safe, high-quality, and culturally appropriate support as they age.



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