



September 21, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities, we would like to extend our sincere congratulations on your re-election as Prime Minister of Canada. Concerned Friends is a non-profit corporation and registered charity. Our mission is to advance the health and well-being and enrich the experiences of those living in long-term care homes (LTC) across Ontario. We represent a growing membership, which includes active volunteers, many who have loved ones living in or previously living in long term care homes.

Our core programs include the provision of outreach, support, and advocacy services on behalf of affected families and caregivers. We also conduct comprehensive reviews and analyses of public policy, regulations, and LTC home inspection reports. Our *Policy and Advocacy Committee* uses the data and information gathered through these activities to advise and make recommendations to the *Board of Directors* on opportunities to address system gaps and help identify solutions.

Among Canadians surveyed recently, 75% agreed that a significant overhaul of our LTC system is necessary.¹ The devastation inflicted by the pandemic on LTC residents, families and staff must not reoccur. **We must move forward now, not conduct more studies.**

Seniors are the fastest growing cohort in Canada. Currently, 52,000 Canadians are on LTC bed waitlists, including those waiting in hospital.² By 2035, Canada will need another 199,000 LTC beds, almost double the current stock. **Even though Canadians prefer to age at home, demand for LTC beds in the coming decades is expected to significantly increase.³**

Canada spends 1.3% of our GDP on LTC, which is below the 1.7% average of the 37 OECD countries.⁴ Significant increases are required to improve the quality of care, working conditions, and to meet the cost of the additional LTC beds that will be

¹ <https://angusreid.org/canada-long-term-care-policy>

² pbo-dpb.gc.ca

³ [https://www.cma.ca](http://www.cma.ca)

⁴ <https://www.queensu.ca/sps/sites/webpublish.queens.ca.spswww/files/files/Publications/Ageing>

required in the future. **Now is the time for decision makers and other key stakeholders to address the current and future needs of our aging population.**

We wish to be seen as a caring nation, but during the pandemic Canada ranked among the worst OECD countries for LTC deaths.⁵ **All levels of government must cooperate to provide LTC residents with the safety, dignity and quality of life they deserve and to address LTC deficiencies arising from years of underfunding and lack of oversight.**

For 40 years, Concerned Friends has been advocating for a system where LTC residents have access to services that meet their diverse needs. They must be safe, cared for, and part of a vibrant and inclusive community. On behalf of our members and Board of Directors, we call on you to act on the following recommendations to make LTC the pride of Canada. **It is time for the federal government to ensure this essential reform.**

Recommendations on LTC Transformation

The federal government must:

- 1. Address Canada's history of underfunding in LTC:**
 - 1.1. Make LTC a publicly insured, accessible and universal core health care service.
 - 1.2. Designate an elder care funding stream through the Canada Health Transfer payments, to ensure that allocations are prioritized to support LTC, and assist provinces and territories to meet the increasing health needs (physical, mental, and emotional) of seniors.
 - 1.3. Provide additional federal funding and expand financing support to provinces and territories for LTC capital development and re-development of new and existing beds.
- 2. Address the current health human resources (HHR) shortage in LTC:**
 - 2.1. Revise immigration policies to attract and accelerate the *Express Entry* of *Personal Support Workers* into Canada.
 - 2.2. Increase existing federal grants for PSW training to further accelerate recruitment to LTC homes.
 - 2.3. Work with provinces and territories to establish national training and compensation standards for the supportive care sector, which enable the attraction, recruitment, and retention of a competent and stable workforce in LTC homes.
- 3. Establish national quality standards and requirements for LTC homes to ensure the safety and excellent care of residents:**

⁵ pbo-dpb.gc.ca

- 3.1. Work with the provinces and territories to implement an effective compliance framework to ensure the achievement of national, provincial, and local standards.
- 3.2. Incentivize the achievement of national standards with supplementary funding to LTC homes, through defined performance measures.
- 3.3. Require mandatory COVID-19 vaccination of all persons attending at LTC homes based on the jurisdiction for quarantines and matters of a national interest.

The LTC deficiencies revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic require federal and provincial roundtables to clarify responsibility for policy outcomes in LTC homes across Canada, which are guided by the determinants of health affecting all Canadians and those specific to seniors. The federal government must increase funding for healthcare and capital development directed to LTC homes, immediately address the national health human resource shortage, and work with the provinces and territories to support the achievement of national standards for LTC.

Concerned Friends, through its advocacy work with residents and families is in a unique position to offer new perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for improvement in LTC. We appreciate hearing from you on our recommendations.

Sincerely,



Laurie Nicol, CAE
President



Mary Kate Saragosa, B.E.S., M.Sc.
Chair, Policy and Advocacy Committee