Concerned friends

# Election Toolkit

Source: Pixabay

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PREPARED BY
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# Introduction

On June 2, Ontario goes to the polls to elect its next provincial government. This is our opportunity, as *concerned friends* of residents in long-term care homes, to raise awareness of critical issues and encourage all candidates to commit to **fixing the system**.

For more than 40 years, **Concerned Friends** has advocated for a system where individuals living in long-term care homes have access to health and support services that best meet their diverse needs; where every person has a voice that is heard, and rights that are respected. Those being served feel safe, cared for, and part of a vibrant inclusive community.

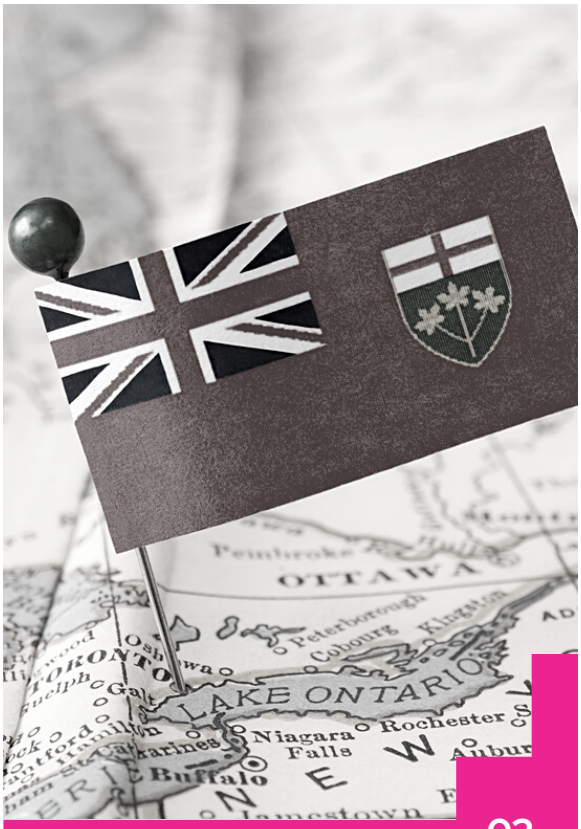
As a charitable organization, **Concerned Friends** is non-partisan and does not endorse a particular party or candidate. We do commit to asking all parties the same probing questions about their plans for long-term care. Our impact will be greater as our members and other supporters lend their voices to this campaign.

# Purpose of this Toolkit

During the campaign, we need as many voices as possible to raise concerns about the quality of long-term care in Ontario and ask each party to commit to urgent action. We hope this toolkit provides you with some ideas about how, where and what you can do to get this important message out.

The kit includes:

- who to contact
- how to get your message out
- how best to frame the messages
- key messages, solutions and questions to ask




Source: Getty Images Signature

# Who to contact

## Find your provincial riding and check that you can vote.

**Elections Ontario**
Go to the site and enter your postal code in the *Voter Information Service* box to find your riding. Under *Voter Registration*, add, update, or confirm your voting information.

## Find your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) if running again.

**MPP Search**
For their contact information, go to the site and enter your home address.

## Find out who is running from all the parties and how to reach them.

**Ontario 2022 Elections Candidates**
You can find all candidates running in the election. To search by party, visit the links below.

- Progressive Conservative Party
- New Democratic Party
- Liberal Party
- Green Party

Source: Getty Images

### Be strategic

Ideally, you will be able to contact all candidates. If time is limited, focus on the candidates in your riding that are most likely to be elected.

# How to get your message out

During a campaign, there are multiple opportunities to speak with candidates and raise issues.

## Canvassing

Candidates at your door or calling you on the phone.

## Debates

Local all-candidates debates or meetings delivered in person or virtually.

## Town Hall

Local or regional issue-specific town hall meetings such as a special forum on health, seniors' issues or long-term care.

## Campaign Office

Opportunities to visit candidates or their staff at campaign offices.

### Add legitimacy to your message

Consider introducing yourself as a member of **Concerned Friends**, an organization that has been advocating for long-term care home (LTCH) residents for more than 40 years. This can add greater weight to your message and demonstrate your serious commitment to the issue.

In addition, you can express your concerns through various media:

- Send a letter to the editor of local or community newspapers
- Submit stories about personal or family experiences with long-term care
- Post comments or questions on Twitter, Facebook or other social media
- Create a blog to highlight issues on a regular basis
- Use social media to reach out to friends and neighbours and encourage them to advocate for fixing long-term care

Source: Akaratwimages

# How to best frame your message

When speaking with candidates, here are a few helpful tips on how to have maximum impact:

## Research the candidates

Know their background, what they have said in the past about long-term care, and how they have voted on comparable issues. The better you know them, the better you can frame your message to catch their interest and garner their support.

## Plan a clear message

Our suggested key messages and facts (on pages 6-7) can help you develop what you want to say in the most effective way. Your time with the candidate will be brief. Prepare your message in advance to be concise and as compelling as possible.

## Propose concrete actions

Focus on solutions and how everyone will benefit if action is taken. Describe how your solution aligns with their party's values, positions and the public good.

## Personalize it

Share your story. Your personal experience with the system puts a human face to the problem and can help candidates connect to the facts and the urgent need for change.

## Talk about the numbers

Have a few statistics ready to back up your call to action. See page 6-7 for examples.

## Be open to an ongoing relationship

Candidates will give greater consideration to your comments if they see you as a potentially helpful resource going forward. Therefore, if appropriate, offer to provide more information and feedback at a later time.

## Remember to stay calm

Sub-standard long-term care home conditions have existed through many governments. Try not to express your concerns in an angry or blaming manner. Instead, show them what can be done, in government or in opposition, so that they win public support and succeed at improving the lives of LTCH residents.

# Key Messages, Solutions & Questions

Over the last year, Concerned Friends has submitted several position papers to the Government outlining the key long-term care home (LTCH) issues and solutions. Overall, they have consistently fallen into the following categories:

| The Problem | Proposed Solutions | Questions to Ask |
|---|---|---|
| **Lack of accountability, enforcement and funding for compliance to meet new LTCH standards.**<br><br>CBC reported that only 9 Resident Quality Inspections (RQI) were carried out in 2019. In addition, we are not aware of fines being levied for lack of compliance. | The new LTCH Act re-introduces annual unscheduled and comprehensive inspections. This is positive but must now be carried out with adequate follow-up and enforcement to ensure compliance.<br><br>There is a direct connection between compliance and funding. LTCHs need significant funding increases to meet the new standards. | What is your party's position on increasing funding to LTCHs?<br><br>How will your government change funding so that homes can meet new standards and improve the quality and safety of LTCHs?<br><br>Will your party implement annual, unscheduled inspections? Will it ensure strict follow-up and penalties for lack of compliance? |
| **Increase quality and safety of care.**<br><br>Residents in LTCHs comprise one of the most vulnerable populations in Canada. In Canada, LTC residents accounted for 3% of all COVID-19 cases and 43% of COVID-19 deaths.[1] | LTCHs must be funded for enhanced staffing models associated with quality, safe care. For example, each home must have a resident medical director, increased number of nursing staff, access to a full range of allied health professionals. | What is your plan to increase quality of care and improve residents' access to a range of health and social supports? |

[1] https://www.cihi.ca/en/covid-1 -resources/impact-of-covid-1 -on-canadas-health-care-systems/long-term-care

| The Problem | Proposed Solutions | Questions to Ask |
|---|---|---|
| **Address LTC human resource challenges (staffing levels and working conditions).**<br><br>Staff turnover and vacancy rates have been high. Salaries in LTCH are not competitive and qualified staff leave to work in other settings (such as hospitals) or other sectors.<br><br>70% of LTCH staff are employed part-time leading to staff turnover.<br><br>Bill 124 caps salaries in the health sector at 1%; LTCH staff earn lower salaries than staff in other health care facilities and will not catch up with this ceiling in place. | A bold and comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy needs to be implemented by Ontario to address vacancies and the need for more qualified staff to care for residents with increasingly complex needs.<br><br>Four hours of personal care, on average, across the province by 2025 is not sufficient. A minimum of four hours per resident must be implemented now.<br>Recent wage increases don't go far enough to make LTCHs competitive with hospitals, resulting in serious staff shortages. LTCH salaries need to be comparable to the hospital sector. | How will your government address the staff shortages in LTCHs?<br><br>Will your government require a minimum of 4 hours of direct care per resident immediately in each home (not as an average over the province)?<br><br>Will your government commit to ensuring more equitable salaries and benefits for personnel working in LTCHs? |
| **Increase total LTCH beds.**<br><br>Ontario's population is aging. Currently, 40,000 people are on the waitlist for LTCHs. The median wait time for a LTCH bed from community is 188 days and from hospital is 114 days.<br><br>According to Statistics Canada, the proportion of persons 65 and over in Ontario is projected to reach between 21.2% and 26.1% by 2043. | Expansion of beds must be in the not-for-profit or municipal sector in order to maximize accountability for public funds and ensure all health dollars go to resident care and not profit lines. | What is your government's commitment regarding expansion of LTCH homes?<br><br>Will you commit to expansion only through not-for-profit and municipal providers? |

# In Brief

The above chart featured on pages 6-7 is detailed and may require more time than is available during an interaction with a candidate.

Source: Getty Images

The questions for candidates are summarized below:

1. How will your government **enforce** the quality standards in the new *Fixing Long-Term Care Act*? Are you prepared to **ensure annual inspections** and **levy fines** for LTCHs that do not comply?

2. What kind of **LTCH investment** can we expect if your party forms the next government? Will you make the significant investment needed to bring all LTC homes up to a quality standard for our most vulnerable residents?

3. What will your government do to address the critical shortage of **quality, trained staff** in long-term care homes? Will you fund **increases in salaries and benefits** so that LTCHs can offer a competitive package for staff?

4. How will your government **improve the quality and safety** of LTCHs? Will you commit to increasing the number of qualified health professionals?

5. Will your government commit to **expanding** LTCHs through **not-for-profit and municipal providers**?

Note: This Election Toolkit includes some information available from AdvantAge Ontario, Dying with Dignity, and CareWatch Ontario.