



Friends of
Medicare

Protecting, Strengthening,
and Expanding Public Health Care



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For Immediate Release

Advocates representing more than 1 million Canadians call for national standards to improve quality, accountability and take profit out of long-term care

Ottawa/Across Canada – Today, advocates representing more than a million Canadians came together to demand that the federal government and provinces work together to establish national standards for long-term residential care. The groups released a [legal opinion](#) setting out a proposal for a commitment from the federal government to ongoing funding for long-term care with clear criteria requiring the provinces to improve quality, accountability and take profit out of seniors' care.

Canadians have been horrified by accounts from the military, families, residents and staff, of the horrendous circumstances in which thousands of seniors were forced to live, and far too often, die. These systemic failures during the pandemic have exposed deep long-standing problems in long-term residential care. Advocates have, for decades, called for seniors' care to be brought into the mainstream of public medicare in Canada. The horrors of the pandemic have prompted renewed and urgent calls from across the country for the federal government to increase funding and establish national standards for long-term care. Federal political parties have responded by making commitments to national standards, but what they would contain is not clear.

Health care advocates including thousands of families; residents and their substitute decision makers; care workers, professionals, nurses and their unions have set out what national standards for long-term care should be, including:

Long-term residential care is an essential component of the Canadian health care system and requires proper federal funding and standards to improve the availability and quality of care. The long-term care program would embrace the five principles of the Canada Health Act under a new Long-Term Residential Care act **public administration; comprehensiveness; universality; accessibility; portability** plus three new criteria:

Quality – including a requirement to meet the care needs of residents and a minimum care standard in each province that will provide the appropriate level of staffing to do so.

Accountability-- including annual surprise inspections and public reporting.

Public/Non-profit care-- including funding for public and non-profit long-term care, and support to expand public and non-profit long-term care.

QUOTES:

The health care that long-term care residents depend upon every day, is every bit as necessary as the care that hospitals and physicians provide. It is long past time to establish national standards to treat them that way. *Steven Shrybman, partner Goldblatt Partners LLP, author of the legal opinion released today.*

There is no short-term fix for long-term care. We need federal funding for long-term care to be tied to provincial compliance with national standards, and to transitioning for-profit providers out of the system.
Pauline Worsfold, RN, Chairperson of the Canadian Health Coalition

COVID-19 has laid bare the systemic flaws in our long-term care system. We are ashamed of the unspeakable neglect and death that has been exposed, which goes against all we stand for as Canadians. We demand that the federal government implement national standards for long-term care that improve the quality of care, accountability and staffing in each province. Providing safe and dignified care to our residents in long-term care is an issue that must be addressed immediately.
Canadians4LTC

The issues facing those living in residential care have been decades in the making, exacerbated by a system which seeks to profit from the care of our most vulnerable, even during such a major health crisis. COVID-19 must serve as a catalyst for much-needed change in Alberta's Continuing Care system—we cannot and must not go back to the same way of providing care that has failed far too many. We need immediate and significant changes to improve long term care across Canada to finally ensure that everyone has access to the care they need and deserve.
Sandra Azocar, Executive Director Friends of Medicare (Alberta)

The pandemic has been gut wrenchingly devastating in Manitoba, with half of our deaths coming from personal care homes. The LTC crisis has exemplified the long-standing systemic issues plaguing the sector, and the deadly consequences of privatization of care. Now, more than ever we need national standards that put people before profits through the removal of for-profit care, and ensures dignified quality care and accountability.
Brianne Goertzen, Provincial Director, Manitoba Health Coalition

Nova Scotians have been sounding the alarm on the crisis in long-term care for over a decade and the pandemic has highlighted the need for urgent action on staffing, infrastructure, funding and oversight. As the need for long-term care continues to grow in the province, having clear and enforceable national standards are critical in ensuring that Nova Scotians get the need and deserve.
Chris Parsons, Provincial Coordinator, Nova Scotia Health Coalition

Almost 4,000 people have died to date in Ontario's long-term care homes as a result of COVID-19. This does not include those who died of malnutrition, isolation and ghastly inadequacies in care. Ontarians join Canadians in utter horror at what has happened, and we want it to be a catalyst for real change. Our province, and others, have no credible basis on which to demand federal funding without strings. The federal government must require standards of care and accountability that restore our humanity as a country.
Natalie Mehra, Executive Director, Ontario Health Coalition

Prince Edward Islanders are shocked and saddened by the number of deaths in long-term care throughout Canada. Fortunately, we have been spared such tragedy, although private homes cut staff, including skilled professionals. Peoples' trust and confidence in LTC has diminished and will only bounce back when there are effective federal standards with clear criteria.
Mary Boyd, Chair, P.E.I. Health Coalition