



Protecting, Strengthening,
and Expanding Public Health Care



National Standards for Long-Term Residential Care

March 22, 2021

For decades, health care advocates have called for a more robust & effective federal role to ensure meet the needs of the elderly as Canada's population ages. COVID-19 has laid bare the endemic and longstanding failure of many long-term care (LTC) homes to provide residents with a safe & healthful environment, and with essential & high-quality care.

While some provinces, notably those in Atlantic Canada, acted quickly to protect the vulnerable in congregate care settings, other provinces failed to do so. Canadians are horrified by accounts from the military, families, residents & staff, of the horrendous circumstances in which thousands of seniors were forced to live, and far too often, die. These systemic failures have prompted calls from across Canada for the federal government to increase funding & establish national standards for LTC.

If implemented, our proposed reforms would bring long-term residential care into the mainstream of the Canadian health care system. Federal legislation would, for the first time, establish a statutory obligation for the federal government to fund, and take some measure of ongoing responsibility and accountability for the sector. As has been true for the *Canada Health Act*, federal legislation on LTC can also help shift societal expectations so that long term care becomes understood as a necessary element of Canada's commitment to providing health care to all Canadians, regardless of the setting in which such care is provided.

Guiding Principles: 5+3

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 & quality of care. Such a program must be supported by ongoing federal funding with clear criteria & transparency. The long-term care program we propose would embrace the 5 principles of the Canada Health Act under a new Long-Term Residential Care act **public administration; comprehensiveness; universality; accessibility; portability** plus 3 new criteria: **quality; accountability; public/non-profit delivery**. The national program would include a national LTC advisory panel & annual reports to Parliament on these criteria.

To meet the national standards we propose and qualify for federal funding provincial LTC programs must:

Improve Quality of LTC:

- Provide a safe, secure home-like environment for residents that meets their care needs.
- Support the cognitive, emotional, social & cultural well-being of residents,
- Increase staffing levels to provide sufficient staffing & an appropriate staff mix to meet the care needs of residents and support for the staff.
- Require a minimum care standard for daily hands-on care that provides for residents' care needs.
- For Indigenous peoples, the LTC program must respect the unique cultures of the communities.

Improve LTC Accountability:

- Provide meaningful recourse for residents, substitute decision makers & staff when care needs are not met.
- Ensure annual surprise inspections, available to the public.
- Include the right for the public to appeal the awarding of LTC licenses.
- Track how the funding provided has been spent to improve quality, oversight & access to LTC.

Take Profit Out of LTC:

- The federal program must provide funding for public & non-profit LTC, and support to expand public & non-profit LTC.