



Stability, Quality, Capacity: Building a Stronger Seniors' Care System

2025-26 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission – Executive Summary

Over the last several budgets, the Ontario government has continued to increase funding for seniors' care. These investments are beginning to bear fruit. New homes are being built as older ones are undergoing redevelopment. More staff are being hired, and the number of hours of daily direct care per resident has been rising, resulting in improved quality of care for seniors. This progress, however, is fragile, and is now facing a substantial threat: the pending dramatic rise in Ontario's seniors' population. These demographic pressures will put a strain on the system unlike anything that has come before and is coinciding with an ongoing health human resource crisis that impacts the ability to retain and attract staff.

To sustain and protect the gains made in recent years, and to position the sector to respond to the anticipated rise in the number of seniors requiring complex care over the near term, there is an urgent need for additional action. AdvantAge Ontario recommends targeted investments in the three critical areas listed below.

1 **Stability:** Addressing the staffing crisis and stabilizing long-term care

Over the last six years, an exodus of staff from long-term care homes has coincided with an increase in the complexity of resident care requirements. As frontline workers in hospitals and other acute settings have received above-inflation wage increases, wages for those in community healthcare settings have lagged far behind.

The province's 2025-26 Budget should ensure homes have the staff they need to provide residents with high quality care, while also meeting their dietary needs by:

- > Increasing Level of Care funding by 8.8% and permanently tying it to inflation.
- > Investing \$500 million annually over the next five years to harmonize wages. This funding should be in addition to ongoing annual increases in line with inflation.
- > Ensuring full compensation for all organizations affected by Bill 124. This includes providing wage reopener funding for homes that did not have negotiations finalized until 2024 or beyond.
- > Fully funding a northern and rural health human resources strategy.
- > Providing permanent funding to support a dedicated position for HR staff and covering the cost of homes bringing on international staff.
- > Ensuring full compliance with the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*, by supporting the hiring of dedicated positions to lead the new requirements for quality improvement and emergency planning.



As staff turnover increases, the job of caring for increasingly complex residents becomes harder, further driving staff from the sector.

2 **Quality:** Supporting the not-for-profit sector's unique role in providing high-quality seniors' care

Not-for-profit homes typically lack access to the infrastructure and resources needed to finance, plan, and execute new projects. These homes require additional support, including dedicated funding from the government to overcome these barriers and address the rapid rise in costs for land, construction materials and labour over the last five years. The 2025-26 Budget should ensure all existing and future not-for-profit development projects can move forward by:

- > Extending the construction funding subsidy supplementary \$35 top-up funding. This includes providing upfront seed funding of up to \$250,000 to not-for-profit LTC homes to cover project planning costs.
- > Providing seed funding to non-profit and municipal homes that wish to establish not-for-profit management support services.
- > Making a long-term commitment to maintain the Other Accommodation funding at 100% for B & C beds until a long-term care home is redeveloped.¹

Not-for-profit long-term care homes are not developers and shouldn't be treated like them.

3 **Capacity:** Increasing support for seniors living in the community

More than nine in ten Ontarians, when asked, prefer to age at home for as long as possible. Unfortunately, many seniors are placed in long-term care not because it is medically necessary but because of a lack of available support in the community that could keep them living independently. Assisted living is the missing piece of the continuum of care that could be keeping more seniors healthy at home. The 2025-26 Budget should ensure that more seniors have the support they need to make their own choices about where they live by:

- > Creating a separate stream of capital and operating funding specifically for seniors' housing and expanding the capacity of supportive and assisted living housing.
- > Providing a 7% increase in funding to seniors' supportive and assisted living housing.
- > Funding for a feasibility study for the Nursing Home Without Walls program.

Building a high-quality system of seniors' care requires an ongoing commitment to invest, collaborate, and grow. In 2025-26, the table is set to protect the success that has been made to date by investing in stability, quality, and capacity. As the population of seniors in Ontario continues to grow, the momentum must continue. The not-for-profit sector looks forward to expanding its offerings and working with the government to ensure that Ontario is the best place in the world to grow old.

Assisted living in seniors' supportive housing providers have not seen a significant provincial investment in years.

¹ B & C beds are older LTC beds that either meet or substantially exceed the structural standards of the Nursing Homes Act, 1972.

