

Long-Term Care Association to Federal Government: It's Time to Focus on Canada's Seniors

OTTAWA, February 9, 2018 – The Canadian Association for Long Term Care (CALTC) is calling upon the federal government to increase the focus on seniors' care as a national priority.

At their Annual General Meeting held in Ottawa this week, the CALTC board of directors supported three strategic priorities for the federal government in response to increasing demands on the health care system resulting from a rapidly aging population.

These priorities are as follows:

- Allow care providers to access federal infrastructure funding in order to modernize ageing care homes across Canada;
- Invest in a new standardized digital data collection system which would allow the federal government to better compare province by province outcomes and quality of care;
- In partnership with the sector, develop a new pan-Canadian health human resources plan to meet a critical shortage of front line care workers.

“The increased challenges and complexities facing Canada’s care providers as a result of changing demographics is enormous,” said Daniel Fontaine, newly elected Chair of the Canadian Association for Long Term Care. “We have no doubt the federal government understands this challenge, and we need to be ready to take the next step in improving care by investing in better homes for residents to live in, and improved abilities for homes to measure outcomes.

“We must also work together right across the country to ensure there is an adequate supply of workers in the long-term care sector,” adds Fontaine. “Without a coordinated effort, we simply will not have the ability to recruit and retain adequate numbers of workers to take care of Canada’s seniors over the next decade.”

According to Statistics Canada, the number of seniors’ age 65 and older will rise by 25 per cent by 2036, and the number of seniors 80 and over will double between 2011 and 2036. Coupled with that challenge, data shows seniors will be entering a long-term care residence with more and multiple health conditions, at a later age in life.

CALTC is calling for government to use the upcoming budget to invest in building new homes and modernizing old homes. Across Canada, long-term care homes are finding themselves increasingly constrained as a result of out-of-date infrastructure as many of the structures were built to design standards that are not suitable for today’s seniors. Without the construction of new homes, Canada has a severe shortage of long-term care beds and is currently not prepared

to meet the demand for care. Due to eligibility restrictions, care homes are unable to access federal infrastructure funding.

Care providers and policy-makers need the best possible data to support individual residents, properly operate in a residential home and to make informed policy decisions. CALTC is calling for the federal government to support standardizing the collection and assessment of financial and statistical data to allow for better evidenced-based decision-making.

To address the shortage of workers, CALTC is also calling upon the federal government to establish a pan-Canadian Health Human Resources strategy to support the recruitment and retention of workers identified as having critical labour shortages. In addition, the board requests that the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship consider immediately expanding the work permit program to include students who are trained as health care assistants in registered private post-secondary institutions in Canada.

Member of Parliament for Nickel Belt, Marc Serré has sponsored a successful motion to Parliament calling for a national seniors' strategy. This week CALTC members engaged parliamentarians from all political parties, raising awareness of these challenges and its priorities to improve care and meet the needs of Canada's seniors.

"Seniors today are living at home longer and arriving at long-term care facilities at a later stage in life, with more complex health issues than ever before," says Fontaine. "With much needed investments in infrastructure, data collection systems, and proper recruitment, governments and Canada's long-term care sector will be in a much better position to address many of the key challenges happening right now."

About the Canadian Association for Long Term Care (CALTC)

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care (CALTC) is a national organization comprised of provincial associations and long-term care providers that deliver publicly-funded health care services for seniors across Canada.

CALTC members represent care providers responsible for the employment of Canadians and delivering quality care to Canada's most vulnerable residents each day. For more information: www.caltc.ca

For further information:

Jessica Stepic, jessica.stepic@santishealth.ca, (416) 433-8087