



**OLTCA**

## **Aging in Community:**

# **The Need for Rural Long-Term Care**

By 2040, the number of Ontarians over 80 will more than double. As rural municipalities work to support aging populations, they face mounting challenges in maintaining services and meeting demand. Without action, more seniors will be forced to leave their communities in search of care, uprooting them from their families, friends, and support networks.

Long-term care (LTC) is a critical part of the solution—not just as a place for care but as a hub that enables aging in place. When LTC is available locally, seniors can remain in the communities they’ve built their lives in, surrounded by familiar faces and essential services.

Yet, without urgent action, rural communities risk losing access to this care. To meet the government’s commitments to redeveloping 28,000 aging LTC spaces and expanding capacity by 30,000, we must ensure rural Ontario is prioritized. Modernizing and expanding LTC homes in rural areas is uniquely challenging due to infrastructure and financial barriers, but these communities need LTC the most to ensure seniors can access care close to home.

## **The socio-economic impact of long-term care in rural Ontario**

Long-term care homes are critical to local economies and job creation in rural communities:

### **Economic Impact**

In 2024, Ontario’s 215 rural LTC homes contributed:

- \$3.3B to GDP and \$2.37B in labour income, and
- 46,848 jobs (direct, indirect and induced)

### **Benefit of Growing LTC**

Modernizing over 9,000 older LTC spaces in rural Ontario, will contribute:

- \$4.7B to GDP and \$3.1B in labour income through construction activity.

In addition, the over 3,500 new planned spaces for rural Ontario will generate:

- \$531M in GDP and \$371M in labour income per year, while
- creating 7,000 new jobs (direct, indirect and induced)

## Supporting Families

Expanding LTC ensures family members and caregivers are not overburdened. Expanding LTC by 3,500 spaces in rural communities will:

- Give rural families back up to 98,929 hours per week, and
- Open up \$2.87 million in income potential for families

Growing LTC also ensures the 1 in 5 seniors over 80 who will need LTC have access, opening up community services for those with less complex needs and their families.

Building more long-term care in rural and Northern Ontario ensures seniors receive the care they need without having to leave their communities. It also preserves hospital capacity, alleviates pressure on social services, and strengthens local economies. When long-term care is available nearby, families stay connected, local jobs are supported, and municipalities remain vibrant places to live at every stage of life.

## A unified effort to keep seniors in their communities

Despite progress, Ontario's long-term care sector remains under immense pressure. More than 48,000 Ontarians are currently on the LTC waitlist—a number projected to exceed 50,000 by March 2025. Without support from all levels of government, many of these seniors will have no choice but to move far from home for care. At the same time, nearly 200 older LTC homes, including more than 9,000 spaces in rural Ontario, urgently require redevelopment to meet modern care standards. Yet, economic challenges threaten these projects, putting entire communities at risk of losing their local LTC homes.

The Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA) is calling for immediate action to secure the future of LTC in rural Ontario. Without urgent action to support long-term care re/development, rural municipalities will face worsening healthcare access, staff shortages, and rising costs—all of which push seniors out of their home communities. Strengthening rural LTC is not just about care—it's about keeping families together and preserving the fabric of rural Ontario. By working together, municipal leaders, policymakers, and the OLTCA can drive the necessary changes to ensure seniors can access the care they need, where they need it—at home, in their own communities.



## About the OLTCA

The Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA) has the privilege of representing 70% of the long-term care homes in Ontario. Like the system itself, the OLTCA includes a range of ownership models: private operators, non-profit and charitable organizations, municipally operated and First Nation homes.

For more than 60 years, the OLTCA has been the shared voice of homes across the province and believes in our collective responsibility to build a strong and sustainable long-term care home sector that delivers the best quality care to Ontario's seniors.