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The Care Economy Data Room: Eldercare

The recent federal election featured vigorous debate about the future of early learning and childcare but surprisingly little about politicians' plans to ensure other forms of high-quality care are available, or how to make all essential jobs good jobs. Here are 10 issues likely to shape the future of eldercare.

1. There are currently [7.1 million people aged 65 and older in Canada](#). That's [18.5%](#) of the population, up from 12.6% in 2001. If immigration and birth rates don't change, nearly [one in four](#) Canadians will be aged 65+ by 2030.
2. Canada spends [roughly 1.2% of GDP on eldercare](#). The OECD average is 1.7% of GDP.
3. [Nine out of ten older Canadians live at home](#). While care needs increase with age, even among those aged 85 and older, [only 32 per cent live in residential care](#).
4. There are currently [38,500 people in Ontario on waiting lists for long term care](#), with [waits as long as 5 years](#). [B.C. waitlists rose 27%](#) in 2019. [Alberta faces a 61% increase in wait times](#).
5. Over 75% of the financing for long-term residential care comes from the public purse ([roughly \\$22 billion in 2019](#)). [13% of public funding goes to home-based care and supports](#).
6. There are only [2,076 long term care facilities in Canada](#). 29% are private for-profit, with a growing market share since 2014, and the highest shares in Ontario, PEI, Nova Scotia, and BC. In 2019, their [average profit was 10.4%](#).
7. By February 2021, residents of nursing homes accounted for [70% of COVID-19 cases](#), and 24,000 long-term care workers had contracted the virus. Most of these deaths took place in [chain-owned for-profit facilities](#).
8. Long-standing understaffing and high-turnover human resource practices worsened during the pandemic. [Even before the pandemic, half of personal care workers in Ontario stayed fewer than 5 years](#), 43% citing burnout. There is also a [19% \(\\$11 an hour\) wage gap](#) between workers in home care and in the hospital sector in Ontario, with similar differences across Canada. The staffing crisis became so critical that the Canadian Armed Forces deployed [1,504 members in Quebec and 285 staff in Ontario](#) in spring 2020. The military helped [Saskatchewan three times](#), [Manitoba](#) in fall 2020 and [Alberta](#) by fall 2021.
9. Ontario announced plans to provide [a minimum 4 hours of care](#) for long-term care residents by 2024-25 (up from 2 hours and 45 minutes) starting by hiring 4,050 more workers this year. Quebec is [training](#) 10,000 care workers, Ontario 6,000, and the federal government another 4,000. In spring 2021, Personal Care Workers averaged [\\$22.69/hour in long term care facilities](#), and \$17.30/hour in home care. About [90% of these workers are women](#), and [41% are racialized](#). Increasingly, [migrant workers](#) provide long-term care internationally. In Canada, [up to 50% of long-term care workers are foreign-born workers in some provinces](#).
10. Meanwhile [about 3 million Canadians rely on unpaid, informal care](#) – 39% rely exclusively on informal care – most of which is provided by women. If current trends continue, by 2050 it is estimated there will be [roughly 30% fewer family members to provide unpaid care](#).

The next edition of *The Care Economy Data Room* will deal with the crisis in and future of health care. The previous edition dealt with these issues in early learning and childcare. *The Care Economy* is a combination of the health/social assistance and education industries. Foundational to the economy, it accounted for [12.75% of GDP](#) and [21.1% of all jobs](#) in July 2021.

For more information and resources see: www.TheCareEconomy.ca