

Established in 1889, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) is the self-regulating body for the province's architecture profession. It governs the practice of architecture and administers the Architects Act in order to serve and protect the public interest.

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Long-term Care
Ministry of Long-term Care
400 University Avenue, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 1S5

[Sent by email to: ltcminister@ontario.ca]

July 10, 2023

Dear Minister,

In March 2020, we collectively began to witness the unimaginable: a hundred-year pandemic sweeping across the globe, infecting thousands across Canada, but particularly vulnerable residents and loved ones in long-term care homes. Ontario architects, many of whom were directly affected by this unfolding tragedy, began to explore what they could do to help mitigate the effects of the crisis.

As the regulator of the profession responsible for the design of our province's built environment, and entrusted to serve and protect the public interest, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) is keen to join its members in playing an important role in assisting the government as it moves forward with the critical task of ensuring the health, safety, and happiness of those who live in long-term care homes.

In particular, the OAA strongly urges government to refresh the *Long Term Care Home Design Manual*. The Association and its membership stand ready to work alongside you to undertake this important work.

Last year, the OAA and consulting firm Jacobs Canada co-sponsored a research project by Dr. Stephen Verderber, director of the Centre for Design + Health Innovation at the Daniels School of Architecture at the University of Toronto. The resulting report, "Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—and Beyond" explores evidence-based design recommendations to improve long-term care in Ontario. The study considers best practices from around the world and makes suggestions about possible interventions that will have profound impacts if implemented in Ontario.

Attached please find a backgrounder and executive summary of Dr. Verderber's report. To review the complete study, [click here](#).



The OAA enjoys a longstanding, collaborative relationship with government and looks forward to working alongside your Ministry in order to promote the public interest.

Sincerely,

S. T. Vilardi

Settimo Vilardi, Architect
M.Arch., OAA, MRAIC, LEED AP BD+C
President

Copy: Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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Backgrounder: *Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond*

Updated March 02, 2023

Call to Action: Urgent Need to Rewrite LTC Design Guidelines in Ontario

Statistics from the most recent Canadian Census of Population highlight the demographic realities and undisputed challenges facing the long-term care of Ontario's older adults. In 2021, according to Statistics Canada, 2,637,710 (18.5%) of the province's population was 65 years of age or older. By 2029, the entire Baby Boomer cohort will reach that milestone. Ontarians are living longer and will have more health issues—consequently, more of us will look to live in long-term care (LTC) homes.

With its disproportionately high mortality rate in LTC homes, the COVID-19 pandemic tragically sounded the alarm for making built environment improvements in these spaces, underscoring the urgent and critical need for a rewriting of design standards and guidelines for LTC homes in the province.

Key Takeaways

A recent study from University of Toronto's (U of T) Centre for Design + Health Innovation, entitled "*Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond*," explores how the built environment can better support LTC communities.

Sponsored by the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) and Jacobs Canada, the study was authored by Dr. Stephen Verderber of U of T's John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design. It clearly demonstrates:

1. There is an urgent need to update and rewrite the minimum design standards for LTC homes in Ontario. The built environment must be considered as important a parameter of care as any other medical intervention.
2. The state-of-the-art international LTC design trends have clearly moved far beyond the minimum design standards currently in place in Ontario. In fact, the state-of-the-art in design for aging is not reflected in the most recent minimum design manual for LTC homes in Ontario.
3. Current minimum design standards for LTC homes in Ontario are architecturally obsolete. This means that updated operational standards will be ineffective if the residence itself is functionally obsolescent and of unsuitable design quality.



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There is an urgent need to update and rewrite the minimum design standards for LTC homes in Ontario.

Finding Solutions: Working Together

In 2021, the Ontario government committed an unprecedented \$1.75 billion over five years to strengthen and modernize the LTC network in Ontario. According to Dr. Verderber, “This financial commitment has the potential to bring about a paradigmatic shift in the province’s long-term care homes.”



The provincial government committed \$1.75 billion over five years to strengthen and modernize LTC in Ontario.

The report, “*Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond*,” provides:

- **50 actionable evidence-based and data-driven design considerations** for procurement, site selection, and architectural and landscape design to help improve Ontario’s long-term care homes; and
- **25 international exemplary case studies** that model design excellence in LTC residential facilities.

As to next steps, the Ontario Association of Architects believes there is an unparalleled opportunity for all stakeholders to work together to update and modernize LTC standards and design guidelines.



The OAA believes there is an unparalleled opportunity to update and modernize LTC standards and design guidelines.

“A rush to refurbish and build new LTC homes will mean a missed opportunity to fix the problems exposed in LTC homes during the pandemic,” says OAA President Settimo Vilardi. “The Association and the architecture profession stand ready to work with all levels of government in advancing design recommendations and finding solutions to transform the quality of long-term care homes for Ontarians.”

To read the study: <https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/reimagining-long-term-care-architecture-post-pandemic-ontario-and-beyond>

To find out more about the OAA’s submissions regarding LTC homes: <https://oaa.on.ca/knowledge-and-resources/government-relations/government-relations-detail/OAA-Makes-a-Submission-on-the-Fixing-Long-term-Care-Act>

About the Ontario Association of Architects

The Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) regulates and governs the practice of architecture in Ontario in the service and protection of the public interest in accordance with the *Architects Act*. It develops and upholds standards of skill, knowledge, qualification, practice, and professional ethics among those in the architecture profession and works to promote the appreciation of architecture within the broader society. To learn more, visit www.oaa.on.ca.

Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond

Updated March 02, 2023

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its ongoing waves, tragically brought to light the vulnerabilities of Ontario's long-term care home (LTC) system.

By March 2021, a year after the onset of the pandemic, statistics showed that 55% of deaths from the virus had occurred in LTC homes. The need to address the disproportionately high mortality rate in the province's 627 LTC homes became a flashpoint for discussion among all levels of government, the long-term care sector and its suppliers, and the public.

Driven in large part by the need to respond to COVID-19, the provincial government committed an unprecedented \$1.75 billion over five years to strengthen and modernize LTC in Ontario in 2021. This financial commitment has the potential to bring about a paradigmatic shift in LTC. It has also focused attention on the urgent need for actionable built environment solutions as to how the planned investment can be most thoughtfully and meaningfully implemented for retrofitting existing LTC homes and the building of new facilities.

To assist in the discussions, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) and Jacobs Canada sponsored the timely study, "[Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond](#)," which explores how the built environment can better support LTC communities.

Undertaken by the University of Toronto's (U of T) Centre for Design + Health Innovation, and authored by Dr. Stephen Verderber of U of T's John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, the study included:

- a comprehensive literature review;
- an analysis of case studies of recently built international LTC residential care facilities; and
- an articulation of site planning, architectural, and landscape design considerations.



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Significant Findings

The study sounded the alarm for the need to make built environment improvements in LTC homes, underscoring the urgent and critical need for a rewriting of design standards and guidelines in the province.

The study clearly demonstrates:

1. There is an urgent need to update and rewrite the minimum design standards for LTC homes in Ontario; the built environment must be considered as important a parameter of care as any other medical intervention.
2. State-of-the-art international LTC design trends have clearly moved far beyond the minimum standards currently in place in Ontario. In fact, the state-of-the-art in design for aging is not reflected in the most recent minimum design manual for LTC homes in the province.
3. Current minimum design standards for LTC homes in Ontario are architecturally obsolete. This means updated operational standards will be ineffective if the residence itself is functionally obsolescent and of unsuitable design quality.



There is an urgent need to update and rewrite the minimum design standards for LTC homes in Ontario.

Design Solutions

According to the study, the COVID-19 pandemic underscores that meeting the minimum design standards for LTC homes not only is insufficient now, but also was *never* adequate. As such, the study points to built environment design solutions that the author hopes will be taken into consideration by both the government and the LTC sector.

These include:

- **50 actionable evidence-based and data-driven design considerations** for procurement, site selection, and architectural and landscape design to help improve Ontario's long-term care homes; and
- **25 international exemplary case studies** that model design excellence in LTC residential facilities. The case studies focus on architectural, landscape design, site planning innovations, ecological conservation and sustainability best practices, as well as the applicability and relevance of each case study to the Canadian context.



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Looking Ahead

The OAA encourages the government to view the study as a roadmap to review and update LTC design standards and guidelines in the province.

Appendix A: Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond

The nine superordinate themes are aimed at improving the architectural and landscape design quality of long-term care (LTC) environments.

Recent and Future Design Trends in LTC Homes

The “Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond” study undertook a literature review that resulted in 272 citations that refer to the LTC physical built environment. The literature was published between 2005 and the end of 2021—this was a period during which the field of environment and aging rapidly expanded.

Based on the literature review, the study presents nine superordinate themes. Inspired by the *Ontario Long-Term Care Home Bill of Rights* and its 27 core provisos, the themes are aimed at improving the architectural and landscape design quality of LTC environments.

The nine superordinate themes and their respective subsections are:

1. Community-Based Aging in Place

- 1a. Immediate Neighborhood and Urban Environment
- 1b. Aging in Place in One’s Existing Home
- 1c. Multigenerational Dwelling Strategies

2. Residential Units and Residentialism

- 2a. Design Considerations and Case Studies
- 2b. Sense of Place and Well-Being
- 2c. Prefab Modular Opportunities in LTC Residential Environments
- 2d. Personal Space and Cultural Factors

3. Nature, Landscape, Biophilia and the Aged

- 3a. Biophilia and Related Theories
- 3b. Design Considerations and Case Studies
- 3c. Therapeutic Gardens
- 3d. Dementia and Nature Engagement

4. Dementia Special Care Units—SCUs

- 4a. Cultural Factors and Dementia SCUs
- 4b. Immediate Living Spaces
- 4c. Influence of the Built Environment
- 4d. Design Innovations and Case Studies

5. Facility Closure and Resident Relocation

- 5a. Cultural Factors in Relocation
- 5b. Voluntary Relocation
- 5c. Involuntary Relocation—Adverse Outcomes
- 5d. Improving the Relocation Process

6. The Expanding Role of Family Engagement

- 6a. Family Engagement—Case Studies
- 6b. Family Engagement—Facility Design

7. Infection Control, Well-Being, and COVID-19

7a. Safety and Infection Control

7b. Lighting, Noise, and Indoor Air Quality

7c. COVID-19

8. Ecological and Cost-Effective Facility Procurement

8a. Sustainable-Resilient Strategies

9. Recent Design Trends and Prognostications

9a. The Green House Model

9b. The Future

Appendix B: Reimagining Long-Term Care Architecture in Post-Pandemic Ontario—And Beyond

The study provides 25 international exemplary case studies that model design excellence in long-term care (LTC) residential facilities.

International LTC Home Case Studies: Design Excellence

The study provides 25 international exemplary case studies that model design excellence in LTC residential facilities. Eighteen of the case studies are in cold-weather climates.

The intent of the international case studies is to explore what these examples might mean for the LTC home sector in Ontario. The case studies focus on:

- architectural and landscape design, site planning innovations, and ecological conservation and sustainability best practices;
- engagement with nature and its therapeutic potential—natural daylight, views, gardening activities, or merely sitting quietly in a courtyard, patio, or roof terrace; and
- applicability and relevance of each case study to the Canadian context.

To read all the case studies, [click here](#).