



# Fighting for a Seniors' Advocate for Ontario

*Mobilizing collective action to establish an independent Seniors' Advocate in Ontario*

**Establishing an independent Seniors' Advocate in Ontario** is essential to transforming the aging experience, safeguarding quality of life, and empowering older adults to age in place.

Guided by the CFUW 2025 Ontario Council resolution, this brief makes the case for a new independent officer of the legislature — one with the mandate to centralize data, identify systemic barriers, and drive cross-sectoral reform. Existing agencies handle administrative complaints or specialized legal issues, but none offer the comprehensive, independent oversight that Ontario's rapidly growing senior population needs.

## By the Numbers

|                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>52%</b><br>projected growth in Ontario's senior population by 2046 — from 2.9M to 4.4M people; those 75+ will double to 2.6M. | <b>\$100 vs. \$750</b><br>daily cost, per person, of home care vs. a hospital bed in Ontario. CIHI estimates 1 in 10 new LTC residents could remain safely at home. |
| <b>50,000+</b><br>Ontarians are currently waiting for a long-term care bed; the wait list has doubled in a decade (OLTCA, 2026). | <b>88%</b><br>of recommendations from Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors' Advocate had been implemented by government as of 2023.                                  |

## 1 The Core Imperative: Supporting “Aging in Place”

CFUW Ontario Council's 2025 resolution calls on all levels of government to work together so Canadians can age in their own homes and communities. This vision rests on two realities:

**90%+**

*of Canadians aged 45 and older want to remain in their own homes rather than move to a long-term care facility.*

**\$100 / \$200 / \$750**

*average daily cost, per person, of home care vs. long-term care vs. hospital care in Ontario — home care is by far the most cost-effective option.*

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) estimates that 1 in 10 newly admitted long-term care residents could remain safely at home with the right supports in place.

As the National Seniors Council (2024) has noted, aging in place depends on a complex ecosystem spanning health, social connection, financial security, housing, and governance. Ontario needs a centralized mechanism to align these interconnected systems.

## 2 Proven Evidence: Independent Advocates Across Canada

Independent, population-specific advocates elsewhere in Canada have a track record of surfacing hidden problems and driving policy reform.

### **British Columbia — Office of the Seniors' Advocate (OSA)**

Operating independently of government, the OSA collects macro-level data that reveals systemic inequities otherwise hidden from view. Its analysis found that nearly half of BC seniors live below minimum-wage income levels — a reality masked in average-income statistics by a small number of very high earners.

### **Newfoundland and Labrador — Office of the Seniors' Advocate (OSANL)**

By 2023, the provincial government had fully or partially implemented 88% of the Advocate's recommendations, driving real improvements in age-friendly community infrastructure and senior housing options.

88%

*of the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Advocate's recommendations had been fully or partially implemented by government as of 2023.*

### The Lesson of Ontario's Child and Youth Advocate (Eliminated 2018)

This independent advocate had successfully raised the profile of youth rights within child welfare. Its elimination left community organizations without the systemic data and policy guidance they relied on — underscoring why non-partisan oversight matters for vulnerable populations.

### 3 Dimensions and Scope of the Proposed Ontario Role

Earlier legislative proposals — including NDP private members' bills 196 (2020) and 101 (2023) — focused mainly on elder-care recipients and caregivers. The role proposed here is broader, centred on a comprehensive Aging in Place mandate:

**Promoting generational cohesion:** a sustainable, home-first approach to aging resonates across generations. Younger Ontarians concerned about the tax burden of institutional care benefit directly from the fiscal savings of supporting people to age at home.

**Independent authority:** freedom from partisan interests lets the Advocate give candid assessments of public services and push for the systemic reforms needed.

### 4 Why Existing Agencies Fall Short

Ontario's existing oversight bodies operate under narrow mandates that leave critical gaps:

| Organization      | Current Mandate                       | Gap for Senior Advocacy                                                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Patient Ombudsman | Health care service complaints        | Does not apply a broad aging lens or address non-medical social determinants of health. |
| Ombudsman Ontario | Public-sector systemic investigations | Has no dedicated mandate or specialized lens focused on senior populations.             |

| Organization                           | Current Mandate                              | Gap for Senior Advocacy                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE)  | Specialized legal services                   | Legal scope only; cannot drive multi-sectoral public policy or administrative reform.                   |
| Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility | Information distribution and program funding | Lacks independent oversight and does not centralize public intake or systemic complaint investigations. |

## 5

### Strategic Implementation: Next Steps for CFUW Ontario Council Clubs

Building on the advocacy resolution adopted at the May 2025 Ontario Council AGM, and on CFUW's initial outreach to Premier Doug Ford, Ontario Council and local clubs can advance this work through the following plan:

**Ministerial engagement:** request formal meetings and submit updated policy briefs to the Premier, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, and the Minister of Health.

**Coalition building:** form partnerships with provincial seniors' advocacy groups, health associations, and home-care coalitions to present a unified voice.

#### Local club action:

- Send letters and petitions to local MPPs calling for an independent Seniors' Advocate.
- Engage municipal councils to ensure seniors' housing and aging-in-place supports are built into local Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) plans.

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