



## What We Heard Report

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CONSULTATION ON WORKING WITH

# Indigenous communities

Helping inform the development of the  
National Standard of Canada for operation  
and infection prevention and control of long-  
term care homes (CSA Z8004)

November 2021



Health  
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## Introduction

### Background

COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on long-term care (LTC) residents, staff, and families. More than 2,500 care homes experienced a COVID-19 outbreak between March 1, 2020, and February 15, 2021, resulting in the deaths of more than 14,000 residents and nearly 30 staff.<sup>1</sup> As of May 2020, more than 80% of COVID-19 deaths in Canada occurred in care homes—the highest rate among thirty-eight Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and well above the OECD average of 38%.<sup>2</sup>

The Royal Society of Canada's report on the impact of COVID-19 on LTC argues that "[o]ur long-term care sector, particularly nursing homes, is in crisis now from far more than COVID-19. The pandemic just exposed long-standing, widespread and pervasive deficiencies in the sector."<sup>3</sup> The report recommends federal and provincial leadership work in partnership to improve Canada's LTC sector, including developing and implementing national standards.

The Standards Council of Canada (SCC), Canadian Standards Association (CSA Group), and Health Standards Organization (HSO) are collaborating to develop two new complementary National

Standards of Canada for LTC. CSA Group is developing the National Standard of Canada for the Operation and Infection Prevention and Control of Long-Term Care Homes (CSA Z8004), which will focus on safe operating practices and infection prevention and control in long-term care homes.

Topics such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), plumbing, waste removal, medical gas systems, use of technology, and cleaning and disinfecting processes will be referenced or inform the Standard. [Professor Alex Mihailidis](#) is the Technical Subcommittee (TSC) Chair and leads the development of CSA Z8004 for CSA Group.

"This past year has brought to the forefront significant issues within our long-term care homes. In response, we need to do all that we can to help ensure that these facilities are places where everyone feels cared for in a safe and compassionate way... Working together with stakeholders, experts, and those with lived experiences, we will develop standards to meet these challenges now and in the future."

—Dr. Alex Mihailidis

- 1 Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2021). The Impact of COVID-19 on Long-Term Care in Canada: Focus on the First 6 Months. Available at: <https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/impact-covid-19-long-term-care-canada-first-6-months-report-en.pdf>.
- 2 Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2020). Pandemic Experience in the Long-Term Care Sector How Does Canada Compare With Other Countries? Available at: <https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/covid-19-rapid-response-long-term-care-snapshot-en.pdf>.
- 3 Royal Society of Canada. (2020). Restoring Trust: COVID-19 and The Future of Long-Term Care. A Policy Briefing by the Working Group on Long-Term Care. Available at: [https://rsc-src.ca/sites/default/files/LTC%20PB%20%2B%20ES\\_EN.pdf](https://rsc-src.ca/sites/default/files/LTC%20PB%20%2B%20ES_EN.pdf). p.5

## The public consultation process

CSA Group has launched a public consultation process to support the development of CSA Z8004, including enhanced engagement activities that exceed the CSA Group accredited standards development process. Through a series of consultations and surveys, CSA Group aims to reach stakeholders from across the country. CSA Group wants to engage technical experts and targeted audiences to gather their perspectives and input on what the new National Standard should address. All feedback from the enhanced engagement activities will be considered in the development of CSA Z8004.

Once CSA Z8004 is drafted, it will be available for a 60-day public review period. Public review is an integral part of CSA Group's standards development process, which provides an opportunity for people to review the draft standard and provide feedback to the TSC. Input gained through the public review can strengthen the content of a standard and, ultimately, its acceptability and recognition. Comments received during the 60-day public review will be provided to the TSC for consideration for the final draft of the Standard.

## Consultation on working with Indigenous communities

On August 4, 2021, CSA Group hosted a consultation session with staff and officials working in LTC serving Indigenous residents. The purpose of the session was to better understand existing gaps and priorities for LTCHs serving Indigenous communities and individuals to inform the development of CSA Z8004. The discussion was primarily focused on the operational and design barriers and enablers of providing culturally appropriate LTC. The following themes emerged from the consultation:



- Culturally appropriate care
- Food and nutrition
- Policies and procedures
- Materials and finishes
- Heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC)
- Hand hygiene
- Environmental design
- Technology

# Themes

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*"Indigenous people are not homogenous—there are many distinct cultural practises and traditions, which makes a one-size-fits-all approach inappropriate. We heard that culturally appropriate designs and operations should be the result of a purposeful approach rather than being implemented as an after-thought."*

— CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CARE, PG.6



## Culturally appropriate care

Culturally appropriate LTC for Indigenous people was the central theme of this consultation session. We consistently heard how important family and community, religious and spiritual needs, access to nature, and access to traditional cultural practices and food are in Indigenous cultures. It was emphasized that culturally appropriate care is fundamental to resident quality of life and requires that LTCH spaces and policies and procedures are designed with this in mind.

Participants noted that delivering culturally appropriate care and designing culturally appropriate spaces requires early and ongoing consultation with the communities being served. Indigenous people are not homogenous—there are many distinct cultural practises and traditions, which makes a one-size-fits-all approach inappropriate. We heard that culturally appropriate designs and operations should be the result of a purposeful approach rather than being implemented as an after-thought.

The importance of language was consistently brought up—residents and staff often speak different languages, and this can be a barrier to receiving good care and socialization. We heard, for example, that language barriers can make it more difficult to communicate COVID-19 IPAC procedures. Participants told us that having someone available who speaks the same language as residents and access to activities in their language, such as radio programming, are important for making residents feel at home.

Participants highlighted the need to ensure that staff and management are properly trained to deliver culturally appropriate care. We also heard that Indigenous residents are often more comfortable in LTCHs with other Indigenous residents and with access to cultural activities and traditional foods. It was suggested that having a LTCH dedicated to Indigenous residents made it easier to design and deliver culturally appropriate care.

## Food and nutrition

We heard that a major aspect of providing culturally appropriate LTC services was to ensure that Indigenous residents have regular access to traditional foods. Participants stressed the importance of traditional foods within Indigenous culture and how it can help residents feel at-home. It was noted that special kitchens may be required for the storage and preparation of wild meats. Regulations vary by province and territory in terms of food safety—for example in Nunavut, traditional foods served raw are available in LTCHs.

Participants also suggested that design considerations be made so that residents can harvest their own food in LTCHs, such as plants and berries grown in a garden. Considerations should also be made for space for families and residents to prepare food together and eat together. It was suggested that residents should have their own individual mini fridges for food storage to prevent cross-contamination.

## Policies and procedures

Participants shared that the COVID-19 pandemic was very challenging for Indigenous LTC residents due, in part, to increased isolation. Many Indigenous LTC residents live far from their families, which makes visitation even more challenging. We heard that caregivers for Indigenous residents should be considered as extended staff in terms of policies and procedures—for example, caregivers should have access to training and education opportunities. Another suggestion was to send regular newsletters to caregivers and families and provide communication options through a website. As visitors often must travel a significant distance to visit, it was suggested that they be provided rooms for overnight stays in some instances.

Throughout the consultation session, we heard that training and education for staff as well as caregivers were key priorities. Cultural safety training should be provided to all staff serving Indigenous residents. Participants emphasized that training and education should be designed in partnership with the population being served. Training should also include basic conversational language skills, such as greetings in the language(s) spoken by residents, to make them feel at home and welcome. Training should be ongoing and include regular refreshers

## Materials and finishes

During the consultation, balancing the need for IPAC and ensuring that a LTCH feels like a home was brought up several times. In terms of materials, it was suggested that flooring should appear home-like and be easy to clean. In terms of furniture material, it should be comfortable but also be easily disinfected. Participants also recommended that outdoor spaces should be designed to be as natural as possible—for example, rather than concrete paths, create real trails.

## Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC)

We heard from participants about the importance of traditional practises such as smudging, which may require separate or modified HVAC systems. HVAC standards should consider the need to accommodate these practices.



## Hand hygiene

During the consultation session, participants discussed the need for handwashing stations be placed throughout LTCHs and be designed to be easily accessible, with consideration for non-touch options. We heard that many existing LTCHs have older sinks and faucets and that some residents shared a bathroom and sink, which was a concern from an IPAC perspective.

## Environmental design

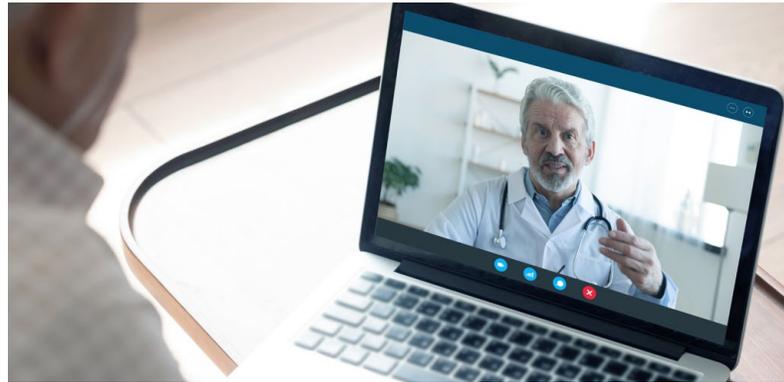
In terms of environmental design, we heard from participants of the need for comfortable, safe, culturally appropriate, and home-like LTCHs. Participants emphasized that LTCHs should not be institutional—in addition to being less home-like, institutional settings can be re-traumatizing for residential school survivors. Some suggested that smaller LTCHs are more home-like and would facilitate IPAC and culturally appropriate care.

We heard that LTCHs should incorporate Indigenous design aspects to feel more comforting and welcoming. Participants also suggested creating a more joyous atmosphere through the use of shapes and colours,

large windows that open so that residents feel closer to nature, and flexible functional spaces that can be used for different purposes. It was also stressed that LTCHs should be designed to allow for resident privacy and dignity.

In the context of COVID-19, participants recommended designing LTCHs to promote hands-free pathways, including the use of automation for doorways. We heard that hallways should be designed with enough space to allow for social distancing. Participants stressed the need for single bedrooms and bathrooms where possible.

Related to culturally appropriate care, we heard that access to nature is critical—this includes outdoor spaces for residents and visitors, and gardens and nurseries where residents can participate in plant care and harvesting. The importance of residents feeling active and useful was mentioned—for example, open kitchen designs would allow residents to participate in meal prep and encourage communal dining.



## Technology

We heard from participants how important internet connectivity is to allow communication with loved ones and caregivers who may be far away. It also allows for virtual health visits, i.e., telehealth, which is important for LTCHs in rural and remote communities. The infrastructure for this should be included in new builds and retrofits for existing LTCHs.

# Next steps

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CSA Group is publishing What We Heard reports for each of the six consultations held and a final report that summarizes the findings of all the consultations and community surveys. The 60-day public review of the draft standard will take place from February to April 2022. This will include CSA Group-hosted information sessions to provide an overview of the draft standard and highlight key sections to encourage feedback.

CSA Z8004 is expected to be published in December 2022. CSA Group will hold information sessions for different targeted audiences and to the broader public to provide knowledge on the new Standard and promote awareness of its contents.

For more information, ongoing public updates on the development of CSA Z8004, and to participate in the discussion, please join the CSA Long-Term Care Community:

<https://community.csagroup.org/community/health-care-safety-and-accessibility/long-term-care-homes>

## CSA Group

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CSA Group is a global organization dedicated to safety, social good and sustainability. We are a leader in Standards Development and in Testing, Inspection and Certification around the world including Canada, the U.S., Europe and Asia.

The mission of CSA Group's Standard Development organization is to enhance the lives of Canadians through the advancement of standards in the public and private sectors. As such, CSA Group continues to be at the forefront of standards research, development, education, and advocacy.

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