



Association Canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants retraités  
Canadian Association of Retired Teachers

# SENIORS' ISSUES FOR THE 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION



ENDORSED BY





## Seniors' Issues Information

To: ACER-CART members, affiliated members, and friends,

Each year, ACER-CART identifies key issues of importance to retired educators and Canadian seniors. We are a national, non-partisan Association that speaks to government and all political parties in support of our membership.

Seniors are the fastest growing segment of our society and their specific needs have yet to be adequately addressed. The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on some of the shortfalls.

We are calling on all levels of government to work together to implement a National Seniors Strategy that would:

- value aging and recognize the productive participation of seniors in society.
- prioritize care in seniors' own homes or close to their own homes
- put Long-Term Care homes under the umbrella of the Canada Health Act to provide national standards and funding
- implement a national, single-payer universal Pharmacare plan that includes necessary vaccines for seniors.
- ensure retirement income for all Canadians.

Our Political Action Committee developed this resource to help our members prepare for the coming election. Please use this information (1) to determine where you stand on each, (2) to talk to friends and family about what is important to you, and (3) to decide how you will vote.

Most importantly, **vote!**

Gerry Tiede  
ACER-CART President

### How to use the information in this brochure:

- Become familiar with the issues as described.
- Evaluate the platforms of the political parties to see which party most closely responds to your issues. Vote for that party.
- Share this information when talking to your friends and family in pre-election discussions.
- Ask some of the provided questions when you are able to attend an all-candidates meeting.
- Ask some of the provided questions when you receive a phone call from campaign workers asking for your support.



## National Pharmacare Plan

### **Key Message: Canada Needs a National Pharmacare Plan**

Canada is the only country in the world with universal health care that does not provide universal coverage for prescription drugs or Health Canada recommended vaccines for seniors. Approximately 20 per cent of Canadians have inadequate drug coverage or no coverage at all and must pay out of pocket. For over 20 years, numerous government and private studies have shown an overwhelming need for a universal pharmacare program.

When it comes to saving lives, vaccines come second in global importance, second only to clean drinking water. The patchwork of funded and unfunded vaccines, non-standardized information and the lack of a universal tracking system have diminished Canada's ability to develop a strong public health policy based on data.

### **Aspects to Consider:**

- Dr. Eric Hoskins, Ontario's former Minister of Health & Long-Term Care, reported that 1 in 5 households reported a family member who had not taken prescribed medicine due to cost, and that almost one million Canadians cut back on food or home heating in order to pay for their medication.
- A universal, public Pharmacare Plan would allow for better monitoring of medications. One in six hospitalizations could be avoided if prescription drugs were used appropriately.
- Canadians pay the third-highest prescription costs of all countries in the world. As a country, we would save between \$4 and \$11 billion with a national drug plan that had interprovincial cooperation in buying.
- As individuals age, their immune systems weaken. Many vaccines have been developed specifically to provide better protection for seniors as they age. This supports their desire to live healthy, active and productive lives and reduces morbidity, mortality and overall health-care costs.

### **Questions for our politicians:**

1. Does your party support a national pharmacare initiative?
2. What will your party do to reduce medication costs?
3. Will your party support and fund a national vaccination plan for seniors?
4. What will your party do to work collaboratively with other levels of government to overcome jurisdictional issues and implement a national pharmacare plan?



### **Key Message: The Need for a National Seniors' Strategy**

A comprehensive National Seniors' Strategy with clear expectations and targeted funding will guarantee basic rights for Canada's older population and ensure that their needs will be met.

Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population:

- 15% of our population is aged 65 and older.
- That number is expected to increase to 25% by 2056.

### **Aspects to Consider:**

#### **1. Value of aging and acknowledgment of productive participation of seniors in their communities:**

- Seniors are often an unrecognized resource in our communities.
- Ageism and age discrimination are real issues faced by many.
- Legislation and conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons must be present and supported to ensure seniors are recognized and valued as vital members of their communities.

#### **2. Continued well-being of seniors:**

- Issues that impact the continued well-being of seniors must be addressed.
- Campaign programs must be created and supported that will:
  - promote healthy active living.
  - encourage age-friendly communities.
  - promote health activities to reduce the effect of disease and injury.
  - reduce social isolation.
- Comprehensive care, depending on the circumstances, can be more beneficial and less costly than hospitalization.

#### **3. Basic needs:**

- All seniors need access to funding to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, transportation, and healthcare.

#### **4. Pharmacare:**

- Include drug coverage as a part of universal health care.
- This would not only reduce the cost of drugs but ensure that all seniors could obtain the drugs they need.

#### **5. Accessing care closer to home:**

- Many, as they age, will need different forms of care.
- The longer that care can be provided either in their home or closer to their home, the longer seniors will be able to remain in their own home, be happier, and reduce the strain on our long-term care homes and hospitals.
- This accommodation would include recognition of family and friends who serve as caregivers.

#### **6. Long-term care homes:**

- Eventually, for some, care can no longer be provided in their home.
- Serious legislative reform is needed to ensure retirement and long-term care homes are places of safety as they provide care for our most vulnerable.



- The operation of long-term care homes needs reform that values the care of seniors and values those that choose to care for the elderly.
- An atmosphere needs to be created that respects the aspects that enrich their lives and reduce the medicalization of their care.

### Questions for our politicians:

1. What programs are you prepared to initiate and support to help seniors be active and engaged in their communities and to age in place?
2. What are you prepared to do to change the legislation around the operation of long-term care homes?
3. What are you prepared to recommend to improve the care of all seniors?
4. How will you support the introduction of a national pharmacare program including the establishment of a national formulary?

### Voter Information

Voter information can be found on the Elections Canada website [electionscanada.ca](https://electionscanada.ca) under the tab **Everything a Voter should Know**.

1. Go to **Voter Information Service** if you have moved since the last election. You may be in a different riding.
2. Go to **Voter Registration Services** to check your registration, update your address, or register for the first time. Those registered should receive a voter information card with reminders when, where and the ways to vote.
3. Options for **Voter Identification** required for Federal Elections:
  - Driver's license or government issued card with your photo, name and current address.
  - Two pieces of ID, both with name and one with current address.
  - If you have no ID, you can still vote if you (1) declare in writing your identity and address and (2) have someone vouch for you. The Voucher (1) must know you. (2) be registered in the same polling station, (3) be able to prove their identity and address, and (4) can only vouch for one person (except in a long-term care facilities).
4. Voting Options:
  - At your assigned **polling station** on Election Day.
  - At your assigned **Advance Poll** held on the 10th, 9th, 8th and 7th days before election day.
  - By **Special Ballot** which must be applied for in advance. Elections Canada must receive your special ballot prior to Election Day.
  - At a **Mobile Poll** if you are in hospital and facilities that provide long-term care.



### **Key Message:** Long-term residential care requires a critical review.

Long-term residential care in Canada requires a serious review. Not only are many of these homes underfunded and understaffed, but the training and compensation for the staff are inadequate for the work they do.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the unacceptable conditions in long-term care homes and amplified the difficulties they face, resulting in unnecessary suffering and premature death for many seniors. As of December 2020, 72 per cent of the COVID-19 deaths in Canada occurred in long-term care homes.

Long-term residential care in Canada requires substantial assessment. Now is the time to make this happen.

### **Aspects to Consider:**

- Include Long-term care in the Canada Health Act to provide national standards for the operation of all long-term care homes in Canada.
  - Terminate for-profit long-term care homes. As of December 2020, 70 per cent of the deaths that occurred in long-term care homes occurred in facilities that are privately run. The profit margin comes at a cost to our seniors.
  - Hire qualified staff for long-term care residences. Ensure appropriate training is available to increase the number of qualified individuals available for the work required.
  - Improve pay for long-term care workers: Set a minimum pay standard and compensation for all long-term care workers. Maintain consistency with workers doing comparable jobs in the hospital sector.
  - Increase number of full time staff by employing at least 75 per cent of staff as full time employees.
  - Legislate a standard of care that ensures each long-term care resident will receive a minimum of four hours of hands-on care per day.
- Demedicalize treatment of residents. Maintain a level of mobility, choice and other freedoms that enrich the lives of long-term care residents, while supporting positive physical and mental well-being.
  - Provide access for caregivers. Legislate residence-access for family or friends serving as caregivers, even during times of contagious outbreaks. Provide adequate PPE when required.
  - Increase funding to appropriate levels immediately to allow the proposed changes to occur.

### **Questions for politicians:**

1. How will your party support legislative changes to bring long-term care homes under the national umbrella?
2. Will your party support the ban of for-profit long-term care homes?
3. Does your party support the need for increased funding for long-term care in Canada?



## Ensuring Retirement Income for Canadians

**Key Message:** Canadians deserve to age with dignity and security, having a guaranteed and sufficient source of income.

A defined benefit pension plan is a pension that we traditionally envision: employers and employees contribute to a pension fund which is pooled and invested so that retirees are paid a guaranteed amount for the rest of their lives, based on a formula that considers salary and years of employment. Defined benefit pensions have proven to make retirement income secure and efficient with up to 80 per cent of pension dollars coming from investment returns. This enables retirees to pay taxes and contribute to local, provincial, territorial, and national economies.

The number of defined benefit plans continues to decline, replaced by defined contribution and target benefit plans, which transfer risk to their retirees and place them in danger of an uncertain future. Properly managed defined benefit plans have proven to make retirement secure.

Specific changes are needed to ensure that pensions are protected during insolvencies. Currently, employees and retirees are left with nothing when their employers go bankrupt with unfunded pension liabilities.

### Aspects to Consider:

- Protecting Accrued Pension Benefits means that no employer is allowed to change compensation earned by retirees once they have retired. Employees can be confident that their future is secure and that their contractually promised pension — their deferred wages — will be guaranteed.
- Protecting Employees and Retirees in corporate insolvencies will ensure they have a secure retirement and not have to rely on tax-payer funded benefits.
- Strengthening Defined Benefit Plans will deliver the same retirement income at a much lower cost than defined contribution or target benefit plans and ensure a secure future for retirees.

### Questions for our politicians:

1. What is your party's plan for retirement income security for current and future seniors?
2. How will you protect all accrued pension benefits?
3. How will you support and encourage defined benefit pension plans?
4. How will you ensure that the pensions of employees and retirees are protected if their employer declares bankruptcy?

## For further information

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