

Geriatric Health Care



What's the issue?

Canada's population is aging. In 2012, almost one in seven Canadians was a senior. Now the number is more than one in six. By 2030, that will jump to nearly one in four. Our health care system (and social systems) needs to re-think how to address the rising needs of this huge demographic. The health system, too, has tended to be oriented to deal with acute care, not for the chronic needs of seniors. The system has also been hospital-based, with less focus on home care and community-based care.

Some challenges

GERIATRIC TRAINING: Canada faces a shortage of geriatricians. Over the next two decades, the numbers of Canadians aged 65-plus will double, and those 85 and over will quadruple. Yet there are only about 300 geriatricians working in Canada (half of those in Ontario). We need to graduate more specialists, but the number geriatric specialization is capped. Beyond that, a wide range of health care professionals, from pharmacists to occupational therapists, work with older adults all the time. They need increased training on serving the seniors population.

HEALTHY AGING: Healthy aging encompasses active lifestyles, social inclusion, mental health, age-friendly communities and coping with change. Yet care, services and policies for seniors can often focus more narrowly on physical health.

LONG-TERM CARE: The number of seniors, and longer lifespans, are creating multiple pressures on LTC. There's a shortage of spaces, a shortage of personal support workers, and those arriving in LTC often require more extensive support.

ELDER ABUSE: Up to 10% of seniors experience some form of elder abuse - physical, psychological, emotional, financial - each year. Still, the awareness of the issue, and resources available to prevent abuse and help victims, remain lacking.



Questions for politicians

- How can we better meet the ongoing and often complex care needs of seniors, in hospital and in the community?
- What sort of geriatric training should be mandatory across health care?
- What are your public policy priorities to boost the overall well-being of seniors?
- What human resources, structural or funding changes can increase the capacity of long-term care?
- How should we invest in serving the victims and raising the profile of elder abuse?

Environmental Stewardship



What's the issue?

Responsible use of resources, conservation, protecting our air, land and water – improving in all areas is critical to a sustainable future. Individuals, companies, industry groups and governments all have a part to play in environmental stewardship. We need to maintain the viability of our ecosystems for ourselves, our children and grandchildren.

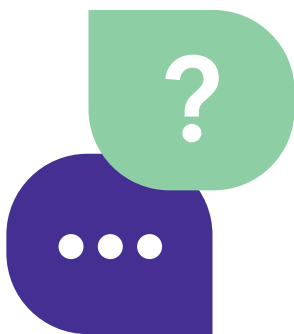
Some challenges

BAN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS: The federal government will ban many single-use plastics starting in 2021. Questions remain around what items will be on the list and the phase-in period. The ban doesn't address the issue of the use of non-essential plastics.

COMMON RECYCLING STANDARDS: With all the recycling efforts made by municipalities and companies, there's much room to improve. For instance, Deloitte reports that just 9% of the plastic waste generated annually in Canada is recycled. One hurdle to greater progress is the lack of a harmonized approach across jurisdictions.

ENVIRONMENTALLY-SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION: Transportation accounts for about one-quarter of Canada's carbon emissions. As our population and economy grows, so do the number of vehicles on our roads.

SAFEGUARDING THE WATER SUPPLY AND DRINKING WATER: Our freshwater resources are a national treasure. The Great Lakes, for instance, holds over 20% of the entire world's surface freshwater. Pollution and misuse threatens that. Meanwhile, while urban centres enjoy access to clean water, First Nations often face drinking water advisories.



Questions for politicians

- What kind of system approach is needed to manage the entire life cycle of plastics?
- What policies or incentives should we have to move from a linear economy (ongoing consumption of resources) to a circular one (reusing resources)?
- What would you do to increase the recycling rate in Canada, and lower contamination rates (i.e. non-recyclable material in the recycling system)?
- What policies will you support to drive more sustainable transportation, i.e. electric vehicles, cleaner public transport, clean fuel standards, biking, etc.?
- What kinds of legislation and changes in business practices are needed to protect our freshwater sources?
- What steps will you take to upgrade water systems and alleviate the drinking water crisis in First Nations communities?

Seniors Strategy



What's the issue?

Seniors are Canada's fastest growing demographic. Gaps in our healthcare and social policies are creating barriers – to seniors' independence, and to their essential role in vibrant, healthy communities and economies. Tackling these issues independently won't give us the results we need. A coordinated national seniors strategy, with dedicated funding and accountable goals, will ensure we meet the evolving needs of seniors.

Some challenges

INCOME SECURITY: 12% of senior families and 28.5% of single seniors qualify as low income. Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security program and Guaranteed Income Supplement are a step in the right direction. Yet more needs to be done. Defined benefits pensions are proven to make retirement secure.

UNIVERSAL PUBLIC PHARMACARE: Canada is the only country in the world with universal health care that lacks universal drug coverage. We consistently pay among the highest prices for prescription drugs. Ten per cent of citizens don't have adequate coverage to meet their needs. One in four households can't afford to fill their prescriptions.

SOCIAL ISOLATION: Meaningful connections with others keep us engaged and socially active. In contrast, socially isolation can affect emotional, mental and physical health. That can happen to anyone, but is a risk after when people retire, lose a spouse, or experience decreased mobility or cognitive decline. Upwards of 30% of seniors are in danger of becoming socially isolated.

AGING AT HOME: Most seniors want to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Health, finances, transportation, safety and other considerations can derail that dream.

RIGHTS FOR SENIORS: The rights of older people are embedded yet not specific in international human rights conventions. Such conventions cover economic, social, civil, cultural and political rights. Ageism and age discrimination are real. Protecting older people's rights will help them to lead dignified, secure lives, as equal members of society.



Questions for politicians

- How do you propose to strengthen defined benefits, protect accrued benefits, and protect employees and retirees ensnared in corporate insolvencies?
- What are you doing to support a federal pharmacare overhaul, or any other measures that could reduced medication costs?
- What plans do you have to find more ways to connect seniors - to family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and their communities?
- How will you improve access to the services/supports that help seniors to live independently, in their home or community, for as long as desired and possible
- What steps will you take towards supporting a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons?