

Saskatchewan 2020 election: Stand up for older adult care and well-being

ABOUT FEDERAL RETIREES

The National Association of Federal Retirees is the largest national advocacy organization representing active and retired members of the federal public service, Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and retired federally appointed judges, as well as their partners and survivors. With more than 176,000 members, and more than 4,000 members in Saskatchewan, we have a proud 56-year history of advocacy on behalf of our members and retirees.

The National Association of Federal Retirees' primary goal is to advocate in the best interest of its members, voicing support for secure, healthy, and dignified retirements for federal retirees and all Canadians. This work is especially relevant as the number of older adults in Canada is constantly increasing. For example, in the last twenty years, the percentage of adults aged 65 years and older increased from 12.5 per cent to 17.9 per cent, while the average and median ages have both increased by four years during the same period.

Federal Retirees has identified four priorities to bring forward while engaging with all governments, political parties and candidates:

- Retirement income security
- Veteran well-being
- Pharmacare
- A national seniors strategy, particularly long-term and home care

While some of these policy priorities are mainly or only within federal jurisdiction, the National Association of Federal Retirees believes that all levels of government, from federal to municipal, have a role to play in ensuring Canada responds to the demographic changes we are witnessing.

The ability to age in place with dignity and security should not depend on your postal code. Canadians of all ages urgently need all levels of government working together on these priorities, to ensure home care is available; medications are affordable; communities are accessible; and retirement incomes are secure.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL RETIREES AND THE 2020 SASKATCHEWAN PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Key messages

Saskatchewan needs to respond actively to the needs of its older citizens in a manner that promotes positive aging within communities and establishes a health-care system which provides a full continuum of care, covering in-home care as well as longer-term care facilities. This will require the provincial government to create and implement a comprehensive seniors strategy to replace its current patchwork approach with an integrated and coherent set of policies aimed at positive aging.

This provincial seniors strategy should be based on three pillars:

- The development and funding of **health and lifestyle** policies, with an emphasis on the role of communities and enabling older citizens to live within their community and within their homes for as long as possible.
- Working with the federal government to develop and implement national standards for long-term care and homecare across the continuum of older adult care, and ensure appropriate funding tied to meeting standards.



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- The creation of an **independent-from-government seniors advocate** position, or greater power and more funding for the minister responsible for seniors, to make sure the needs and priorities of older adults are more effectively represented within and addressed by governments. This position would oversee the implementation of the seniors strategy and would hold current and future governments accountable for its outcome.

What are the issues?

Too often, aging is viewed negatively. Older Saskatchewanians need our next provincial government to invest time and funds in positive aging policies that focus on a continuum of care that enables aging in place for as long as possible and offers effective, accessible long-term care options.

The future well-being of older citizens of Saskatchewan depends on parties' vision for older adult care, and on the commitments our next provincial government will make to achieve that vision. Every party that is running during this election campaign should be committing to policies that address these issues.

Across the country, as well as in Saskatchewan, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long-standing issues with health and older adult care, resulting in devastating circumstances in long-term care homes and similar facilities, and for older adults and vulnerable populations generally. These issues cannot be ignored by governments anymore. That's why we are calling for the establishment of higher standards and better quality services in long-term care facilities, whether public or private.

While Saskatchewan has a provincial minister, who is partly responsible for the well-being of older citizens, this portfolio demands a dedicated position with greater scope and focused responsibilities, which could be achieved through a single-portfolio minister or the introduction of a seniors advocate. This will ensure older adult policy priorities are well-represented within government, and that these issues get the independent scrutiny they require.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be additional health-care concerns to address, including procedure and surgery backlogs, mental health impacts resulting from the pandemic and the social effects of the measures put in place to stop the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 is a challenge for all Canadians, including Saskatchewanians, but it is also an opportunity to transform our health-care system and rethink older adult social services for the better.

SOME CHALLENGES

Positive aging

- Ensuring an integrated continuum of care (that is, coordinated and continuous care across health-care services) close to home is vital. This will ensure Saskatchewanians can access the care they need in comfortable and familiar settings in their communities.
- Most older Saskatchewanians would like to age at home but need proper support to do so. We need a health-care system that is based on a continuum of care, from home to long-term care facilities. Our health-care system should prioritize aging in place and facilitate community engagement when and if a transition to long-term care is necessary.
- Maintaining independence and community engagement are key goals of positive aging. Social isolation, elder abuse, ageism and a lack of age-friendly services can worsen quality of life, and lead to poor health outcomes, higher social costs and the loss of vital economic and social contributions from older populations.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the worsening social conditions in our communities. Social isolation must be addressed to ensure older adults continue to thrive in their communities

Higher standards for long-term care homes

- As we have witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are some unacceptable discrepancies in the quality of service in the long-term care homes. We need higher, more consistent standards of care in these facilities, whether public or private.



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While the federal government committed this work in the 2020 throne speech, Canadians expect provinces to collaborate with all levels of government to improve circumstances in long-term care settings.




Oversight and accountability

- With demographic changes and population aging, addressing the needs of older adults and their support networks, including informal caregivers, is increasingly important. This calls for a seniors advocate position or a minister fully dedicated to elevating older adult priorities within government, with the power to steward a provincial seniors strategy and hold governments and care providers accountable.




INSIGHTS FROM NATIONAL MEMBER SURVEY ON OLDER ADULT CARE AND COVID-19

In August 2020, Federal Retirees conducted a survey of its members to better understand their views with respect to three key areas, especially given COVID-19: long-term care, home care and caregiving.

Views of respondents with personal experience in each area

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Quality of life (99%) •Quality of care (98%) •Better regulation and oversight (97%) •Access (91%) •Increasing staffing (94%) <p>Ranked as very important or important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Quality of life (98%) •Quality of care (94%) •Access (92%) •Better training for staff (90%) •Better regulation and oversight (87%) <p>Ranked as very important or important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Amount of time dedicated to caregiving (82%) •Impact on other aspects of life (78%) •Effect on mental health(76%) •Availability of supports to navigate system (67%) <p>Identified as having moderate to large impact on unpaid caregivers..</p>
<p>Long-term care</p> 	<p>Home care</p> 	<p>Caregiving</p> 

Respondent views on long-term and home care reform

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •81% believe their province/territory should conduct one coordinated, independent and public review on long-term care. •76% believe the same should be done at the federal level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •82% believe a national framework for long-term care that ties funding to national standards should be implemented. •80% believe the same should be done for home care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •81% believe that a national health workforce planning strategy should be implemented.
<p>Long-term care review</p> 	<p>National standards</p> 	<p>Health workforce</p> 

ENGAGING WITH CANDIDATES

During Saskatchewan’s provincial election, you may have an opportunity to engage with candidates and/or political party members and officials—keeping a safe physical distance, of course! This might include calls from candidates, door-to-door canvassing by political parties’ volunteers, radio call-in shows and telephone or web-based town halls offered by campaigns.

You can also reach out to your local candidates by phone or email, or on social media.

If you have a chance, consider asking your local candidates about the following issues—and send a short email to advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca to let us know how your candidates answered!



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We know that demographic changes are reshaping our societies in meaningful ways. In order to meet the needs of its aging population, Saskatchewan needs a comprehensive seniors strategy composed of three pillars: policies that enable positive aging, a dedicated seniors advocate and higher standards for long-term care homes.

- ▶ *What is your party's plan to promote positive aging through government policy, and particularly for the development of a better and more fluid continuum between home care and community supports, and long-term care?*
- ▶ *Many people are calling for national standards in long-term care homes. The federal government committed to action on this issue, but Ottawa will need the collaboration of every province. Is your party committed to working with the federal, provincial and territorial governments on this, and what is your party's plan to take action on this urgent issue in the meantime?*
- ▶ *Many provinces are having conversations about the relevance of a seniors' advocate position to ensure the policy priorities of older adults are adequately represented and addressed by government. A seniors advocate could also hold future governments, and providers of health and social services, accountable for their treatment of older adults. What is your party's position on this proposal?*

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