

# 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

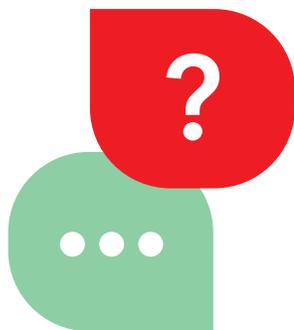
**INCOME SECURITY:** 12% of senior families and 28.5% of single seniors qualify as low income. Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security program and Guaranteed Income Supplement are a step in the right direction. Yet more needs to be done. Defined benefits pensions are proven to make retirement secure.

**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, social 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 reduce medication costs?
- What do you think about medication cost sharing between the federal government and the provinces as a further step towards universal healthcare?
- 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?