



2019 Federal Election

Seniors Priorities Guide

October 21, 2019 will be the day Canadians go to the polls in the next federal election. For many seniors, voting is a way to show support for what matters to them. In fact, voters aged **65 to 74 are more likely to vote** than other age groups with a 79% turnout rate in the 2015 federal election (Elections Canada, 2016).

The Council on Aging of Ottawa has identified four key election priorities for seniors in Canada.

1. **Federal Leadership**
2. **Health, Well-Being, and Quality of Life**
3. **Financial Security**
4. **Housing**

How to use this Guide

This guide provides you with background information as well as sample questions to ask political candidates leading up to the election. While it is not all the priority issues of seniors, it will help you to think about the issues that matter in your life.

You know best! You know and can talk about the issues that matters to seniors in your community.

Ottawa's Changing and Aging Population

Based on the 2016 Census, we know Ottawa's population is growing, changing and aging.

- **Seniors (65 years and older) are the fastest growing age group in Canada.** In 2016, seniors were 15% of the total Ottawa's population; younger than the rest of Canada at 17%.
- By 2036, **the older population will account for 21% of Ottawa's total population.** In comparison, 25% of Canada's population will be seniors reaching 10 million seniors.
- **Ottawa's older population is becoming increasingly diverse.** About one third of Ottawa's older population are immigrants with most living in Canada for over 35 years.
- **17% of seniors have French as a first language,** compared to 15% of the total population.
- **Almost 50% of seniors have a disability.** And, 85% of older women and 77% of older men have at least one chronic health condition.
- **93% of older Ontarians are living in private households** with most (63%) live with a partner or spouse or 24% live alone.



Federal Leadership

Leadership by Seniors

- **Age-friendly communities are supported at the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal levels.** This initiative encourages communities to be more age-friendly in their urban planning, services, and structures. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, there are over 1,000 Canadian communities are engaged in age-friendly community activities including Ottawa.
- **Seniors continue to play an active role in their community.** In 2013, seniors aged 65-74 contributed 231 volunteer hours. More than any other age group. In fact, volunteers aged 55+ contributed 39% of the volunteer hours. On average, they also made \$715 in donations per year compared to \$512 for all Canadians (Turcotte, 2015).

Leadership for Seniors

- In 2018, Filomena Tassi was appointed as **Minister of Seniors**. The Minister is supported by the **National Seniors Council**.
- Since 2004, the **New Horizons for Seniors Program** has invested over \$480 million in community-based projects “designed by and for seniors who make a difference in the lives of others and their communities.”
- Since 2001, the federal government invested in the **Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging** as a strategic initiative of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). In 2015, CIHR committed an additional \$80,606,000 to this initiative.

- In March 2018, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) released its report *Advancing Inclusion and Quality of Life for Seniors* recommending a **national seniors strategy**.
- Canada is a signature to the United Nations declarations on the rights of children and persons with disabilities. Currently, there is no national seniors’ strategy or an international **declaration on the rights of older persons**.

Questions to Ask Candidates

1. How will your party ensure that needs of seniors are considered in policies and actions of the federal government?
2. How will your party support New Horizons Seniors Program?
3. How will your party support research that is relevant for seniors?
4. How will your party address the need for a national seniors strategy? If elected, to what extent will your party support an international declaration for the rights of older persons?
5. How will your party encourage seniors to be active and engaged in the community?
6. When calculating health and social transfers to provinces and territories, how will your party consider the differences among regions that are affected by the increasing aging population?

Health, Well-Being, and Quality of Life

Health Status

- Canadians are **living longer with chronic conditions**. Canadian can expect to live another 21.8 years after turning 65. Yet, older Canadians can expect to live in an ‘healthy’ state for 16.6 of those years (PHAC, 2016).
- The four main reasons seniors go to hospitals are **falls, vehicle collisions, accidental poisoning, and self-inflicted injury and attempted suicide** (CIHI, 2019).
- The four causes of death for seniors are **cancer, heart diseases, stroke, and lung diseases** (Statistics Canada, n.d.).
- **564,000** Canadians are living with dementia, of which, 65% are women. By 2031, this number is expected to grow by 66% (Alzheimer Society of Canada, 2016).

Equitable Access to Care

- **91% of seniors felt they could access health care**, other than home care services, when they needed it (COA, 2017).
- There are many seniors who have unique healthcare needs including **Indigenous seniors, Francophone seniors, and seniors living in rural communities** (COA, 2017).
- The cost of health and home care can “undermine income security” (HUMA, 2018).

Families and Caregivers

- As many as **60% of seniors care for family members and friends** (COA, 2017). Home care and community support services can play a key role in meeting the growing care needs of seniors living in the community (HUMA, 2018).

Social Inclusion

- **Most seniors** have a **strong sense of belonging** to their community. A strong sense of belonging is linked to better health and well-being (COA, 2017).
- **35% of Canadians** admit to treating someone differently because of their age (Revera, 2014).

Elder Abuse

- About **8% of seniors experience mistreatment** in Canada (McDonald, 2015); including abuse and neglect; actions and/or behaviours, or lack of actions and/or behaviours that cause harm or risk of harm within a trusting relationship.
- **Seniors are more likely to be abused by family members and are less likely to report it to police** than other age groups (COA, 2017).

Falls

- In Canada, **20% of seniors fall each year**, with 27% of seniors 80+ falling more often; many injured enough to make it hard to do things they normally do (CIHI, 2019).
- **Falls most often happen in the home** from beds and chairs or downstairs. Snow and ice lead to many weather-related falls too. Seniors health, independence, and sense of safety can be affected (COA, 2017).

Emergency Preparedness

- In the past few years, **Canada has become increasingly affected by several natural disasters**. Seniors are more likely to be affected by these disasters (NRC, 2015).



Questions to Ask Candidates

1. Health and well-being are priorities for seniors. What role do you see the federal government play in health of Canadians? How will your party commit to equitable access to care across the healthcare continuum?
2. How will your party support access to health services outside the Canadian Health Act, such as home care, pharamcare, long term care, dementia care, and end of life care?
3. How will your party support caregivers and families through caregiver tax credits, EI benefits, and caregiver leave to reduce the out-of-pocket expenses?
4. Canada's population is diverse. What will your party do to ensure that there is equitable access to health care among diverse populations including: Francophone; Indigenous; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+); multicultural; and rural seniors?

Financial Security

Income

- **The median household income for seniors in Ottawa is \$39,500**, the highest among all other cities (\$27,400 national median).
- Older adults (55+) had the **largest growth in after-tax income** between 2005 and 2015 at 56% compared to 25% across all age groups.
- **While only 9% of seniors in Ottawa live in a low-income household**; some groups are more at risk including older women (over 85 years) who are living alone, Indigenous seniors, and recent immigrants (COA, 2018).

Retirement

- **One in five seniors aged 65-74 are still employed**, with many working part-time, part year, or self-employed (COA, 2018).
- While the average age at retirement is 63.8, almost half of workers 60+ work do so out of necessity to pay bills, supporting other family members, and/or because they are not eligible for pension (Hazel, 2018).

Spending Power

- Spending data show that older consumers purchase various products and services.
- Did you know, older adults (55+) in Ottawa are the second largest consumer group with access to **\$12.6 billion of aggregate after-tax income power** COA, 2018).

Questions to Ask Candidates

1. How will your party support seniors who are living on a low income and/or work out of necessity?
2. Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS), and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) are the key pillars of federal income support to seniors. What is your party's plan to further support and enhance these programs for seniors today and tomorrow?
3. Will your party consider tax credits for seniors who use public transit and fitness and health programs?
4. How will your party protect older consumers?



Housing

National Housing Strategy

- Canada's new housing strategy ***A place to call home*** is a positive step forward. Canada has been one of the few G7 countries without a national housing strategy. The declaration that "housing is a human right" is a welcome from the federal government (COA, 2018).
- **Canada continues to face a critical shortage in affordable housing** affected by aging social infrastructure that is expensive to retrofit, available housing stock, fewer affordable housing units being built than in earlier decades, and barriers for some not-for-profit organizations to access capital to buy land to build affordable housing units (COA, 2018).
- **A real housing strategy for seniors is needed.** A seniors' strategy would:
 - Increase the number of seniors' units to keep pace with the growing aging population; targeting 17% of new units now and 25% by 2036.
 - Fund co-housing and co-op housing projects.
 - Assure that seniors housing is a part of all new forms of housing development.
 - Plan for housing to include services to provide care "closer to home" when seniors need support to remain independent and socially connected (COPA, 2018).

Households

- In 2011, **92% of seniors lived in their own homes** in Ottawa; of which 26% were renters.
- **42% of all households** are maintained by someone **aged 55 and over** (Norris, 2018).
- **Rent in Ottawa is \$1,112**; higher than national median of \$910 (CMHC, 2018).

Affordable

- **Affordable housing should cost less than 30% of your income.** Costs include mortgage/ rent, hydro, heating, water, property taxes, and fees (CMHC, 2007).
- **23% of seniors in Ottawa are living in unaffordable housing**; higher than the national average (14%). Senior renters are more likely to spend more housing (54%) (Norris, 2018).

Accessible

- **As we age, we may experience physical and cognitive changes that can limit our movements, senses or activities. It can make it difficult to stay in our home.** The home may need to be adapted to be safe and barrier-free.
- More housing options in Ottawa that are accessible, especially for a growing aging population is needed (COA, 2019).

Available

- In Ottawa, **approximately 4,368 senior households are on the wait list for social housing** (OAGO, 2017). An additional 2,700 seniors are waiting for LTC. This is 5% of the seniors in Ottawa waiting for alternate options.

Appropriate

- While most seniors want to live in their own homes, **sometimes their housing does not meet their needs.** Suitable housing for seniors is in good repair and able to meet changing needs as they age (COA, 2017).
- **Older women living alone are more likely to live in core housing need than senior men** (27% compared to 21%) (Government of Canada, 2017).

Questions to Ask Candidates

1. How will your party make housing in Canada more affordable, accessible, available, and appropriate for seniors?
2. Seniors are exploring innovative housing options, such as co-housing and intergenerational housing. How will your party support the implementation of the National Housing Strategy and keep pace with changing housing trends and initiatives to support seniors' choices?
3. Considering that seniors are a diverse group depending on their age, health, finances, and cultural background, how will your party support their unique housing needs?
4. Many seniors want to stay in their homes for as long as possible. How will your party address the shortage of viable options and supports for seniors to stay in their homes, such as access to home and community care?
5. If elected, what will your party do to address the use of federal lands, such as LeBreton Flats, to meet the housing needs of seniors in Ottawa?
6. If elected, what will you do to secure funding for housing initiative for seniors in Ottawa?

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Get Involved!

Your voice matters. A simple way to take part in the federal election is to **VOTE!**

Elections Canada wants you to register to vote!

Check out www.elections.ca for more information on how and where to vote.

Before the election you may wish to:

- Review the political platforms of registered parties. A list of the parties can be found at www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=pol&dir=par&document=index&lang=e
- Get familiar with the candidates in your electoral district (riding). A list of candidates in each riding is available on the www.elections.ca/scripts/vis/FindED?L=e&PA&GEID=20. Use your postal code to search
- Request a meeting with local candidates to discuss your issues
- Write a formal letter or email to each of your local candidates and ask for their position on one or two issues
- Submit a letter to the editor. Brief reactions to recent news items will have a better chance of being published
- Attend an All Candidates meeting in your electoral district. Watch your local media for information or ask your local candidate for the schedule of events
- While at an All Candidates meeting, ask candidates questions from the **COA's 2019 Federal Election Seniors Priorities Guide**
- Make sure you **VOTE** on **October 21, 2019!**



For more information

www.coaottawa.ca

OUR VISION: Respected, informed and engaged seniors living in an age-friendly city

OUR MISSION: The Council on Aging of Ottawa serves as a leading community voice in both official languages for Ottawa's seniors.

Our aim is to help Ottawa become more age-friendly by identifying and addressing issues and services that impact the lives of seniors.

**The Council
on Aging
of Ottawa**



**Le Conseil sur
le vieillissement
d'Ottawa**