



2022 Provincial Election Guide

Advancing the Wellbeing of Ottawa's Older Adults

June 2 will be the day Ontarians go to the polls in the next provincial election. The 2022 Provincial Election Guide was developed building on the expertise of the Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA) network. It is meant to assist older adults living in Ottawa to engage with candidates during the election campaign.

This guide provides you with background information for easy reference and sample questions you may wish to ask political candidates during the election. While it is not a full list of the priority issues of older adults, it will allow you to speak with confidence about the issues that matter to you during this election.

You know best! You know the issues that matter to older adults living in Ottawa. Do not hesitate to bring up your experience and propose solutions that would benefit older adults in Ottawa and Ontario. As well, ask what candidates are prepared to do to move your issues forward.

The next elected provincial government will have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of older adults and persons with disabilities in Ontario. You have an important role in helping shape the debate on the issues that matter to you and to all older adults.

The Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA) has identified three priorities to help you get involved in this election:

- Supporting strategic leadership and developing a comprehensive older adult strategy that advances the physical, mental, social, and economic wellbeing of older adults
- Accessing a continuum of care, in English and French, wherever older adults call home, with significant investment in home and community care and improvement in long-term care now and into the future
- Creating inclusive, age-friendly communities with access to affordable and accessible housing and transportation

Your vote counts and makes a difference!



Priority #1: Supporting strategic leadership and developing a comprehensive older adult strategy

The past two years have been extremely challenging for all of us, but particularly for older adults. The pandemic impacted the health and wellbeing of older adults disproportionately and underlined the need to enhance the security and safety of older adults. The economy with rising inflation observed these past two years directly affected older adults' economic security.

The older adult (aged 65 and over) demographic is projected to almost double in the next 25 years with the number expected to grow from 2.6 million (17.6%) in 2020 to 4.5 million (22.2%) by 2046. Further, the growth in the share and number of older adults will accelerate over the next 10-year period as the last cohorts of baby boomers turn 65 with just as many people under the age of 50 as over the age of 50 and the largest cohort of older women over 80.

As a bilingual and inclusive Council, the COA stresses that provincial funds and policies must be managed in such a way as to serve the Francophone population of Ontario, by ensuring that older Francophone adults have access to the same services in French, including the hiring of Francophone staff, or at the very least bilingual, where required. Similarly, consideration must also be given to addressing the diverse needs of older adults across the province. Low income, language, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and health status should not be barriers to timely access to supports and services.

A Comprehensive Older Adult Strategy

The COA urges the government to broaden its vision to build an age-friendly Ontario that listens to older adults and strategically work together to support infrastructure, policies, programs, and services that address the rights and needs of older adults. Such investments must be sustained and take place within the context of a Comprehensive Older Adult Strategy to meet the multidimensional needs of our aging society and place emphasis on a post-pandemic recovery that advances the wellbeing of older adults in Ottawa. Particular attention must be devoted to engaging with older adults to address the urgent needs of older adults in the areas of public health, home and community care, housing, accessibility, transportation, and income security.

The COA urges government to appoint an independent Seniors Advocate who engages with older adults and their families, analyzes seniors' services, and makes recommendations to government and service providers in these six areas.

Questions to ask candidates

If elected, would you support the development of a comprehensive strategy for older adults and the appointment of an independent Seniors Advocate to engage with older adults and their families?

If yes, what do you intend to do to move this important matter forward?

How will your party ensure that the rights and needs of older adults are considered, equally to francophones and anglophones, in policies and actions of the government; and, that older adults are included in the development and implementation of these plans?

How will you support strong federal/provincial/territorial relationships to ensure strong infrastructure for older adults to remain active, engaged, and connected in the community?

A Comprehensive Policy Review

In the years ahead, problems can be anticipated to ensure the retirement income system functions effectively. For example, workplace pensions face problems of declining rates of participation and a shift to defined contribution type arrangements. The pandemic has made it clear that changes are needed in our approaches to long-term care. The aging of the population will also add pressure on the expenditures of retirement income programs and services for older adults – especially long-term care and health care.

The complexity of our retirement income and health service programs, and their interactions, make it impossible to solve our problems program by program. Given the important roles of all levels of government in this area, they cannot be solved by one level alone. **Thus, we urge the Province of Ontario to propose and support a joint federal-provincial initiative to identify and examine the relevant medium-to-longer term changes and pressures (demographic, labour markets, income and wealth, health, etc.).**

Questions to ask candidates

If elected, how would you support the development of a comprehensive policy review through a joint federal-provincial initiative with the goals to address fiscal and economic impacts on older adults' income and identify solutions to improve their financial health?

An Improved Canada-Wide Health Data System

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive Canada-wide health data system, as noted in the first two reports of the Expert Advisory Group on a pan-Canadian Health Data System. The pandemic has highlighted the poor state of the health data that, if the data had been available, it would have helped in making informed decisions across the system.

Health needs and services should follow an individual regardless of where the individual is physically located and regardless of which organization is providing the health services. A national data system would support integrated and accessible health care across the continuum of care. It would also be a valuable tool to support planning of health services and investments in health care that will change over time with the rapid growth of older Canadians.

Canada needs a real-time, person-centred, revitalized pan-Canadian, health data infrastructure, both to support the best patient care as well as providing the foundation for transforming Canada's and Ontario's health care sector to be more efficient in servicing Ontarians.

Questions to ask candidates

Improving Canada's and Ontario's ability to collect, protect and use health data will inform health care and public health system adaptation, improve processes for data sharing, and help Canada prevent and respond to future health threats. If elected, would you commit to exercise leadership towards a provincial/ federal/territorial effort to build, improve, and maintain a much-needed Canada-wide health data system?

And as a first step, in Ontario, will you commit to implement the linguistic language variable on the health card?

Priority #2: Accessing a continuum of care, in English and French, wherever older adults call home, with significant investment in home and community care and improvement in long-term care now and into the future

In Ontario 94 per cent of people 65 years and older live in their own homes. Ontario has approximately 56,500 older adults living in private retirement homes and 78,000 living in publicly funded long-term care homes. The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) reported in August 2020 that most older adults want to live at home for as long as possible. Older adults can stay at home longer if they have access to community support services and home care. Unfortunately, home care is not always available to those in need, and it is estimated that one fourth of individuals entering long-term care (LTC) have needs that could have been served in the community.

Facilitating older adults to stay at home and in their communities	Questions to ask candidates
<p>Various studies have shown home care to be a much more cost-effective way to support older adults' care needs while enabling their desire to remain at home and in their communities. Older adults are admitted earlier than required to LTC or remain in hospital beds longer than required when home care and community support services are not available. Given the choice, most people would prefer to stay at home with services. Complex care can successfully be delivered at home with the advent of technology enabled monitoring, and cost savings to the system can be substantial.</p>	<p>What will your party do to ensure older adults receive adequate home and community care services?</p> <p>Does your party recognize that allowing older adults to remain longer at home with adequate services helps to avoid social isolation and, moreover, is more cost-effective than institutional care?</p>
<p>Home care capacity needs to be developed so that the health system functions at a more optimal level. For example, a 2020-2021 annual report of the Ottawa Hospital indicated that 20.6% of inpatient beds were occupied by patients waiting for care at home or in a LTC home. The cost per day of receiving care is as follows: in an acute care hospital approximately \$826; in a long-term care home \$182; through home care \$60.</p>	<p>Good health system planning would result in better outcomes and be more cost-effective. What are your Party's plans to address the system challenges that exist?</p>
<p>There are long waiting lists for home care services. As of January 31, 2022, in Ottawa and the surrounding area 5,483 people were on wait lists for services such as personal support, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology, and social work. The longest wait list is for personal support workers whose care is central to people being able to stay at home.</p>	<p>How will you support the growing demand and preferences for services to be delivered at home?</p>

Many families have had to default to private care because of the wait list, minimal hours of service offered, and restrictions on types of services allowed. **It has been estimated that in total about 30% of households pay entirely out of pocket for home care services for themselves or a family member.** Home care services are defined by program requirements set by the government and some necessary supports that would enable an individual to live at home are not covered.

What will your Party do to ensure family caregivers are supported without putting their own physical, mental, and financial health and well-being at risk?

Building Capacity and Transforming LTC

Questions to ask candidates

The challenges in long-term care (LTC) homes include:

- access to adequate and appropriate staffing
- **restoration of public trust especially following the inadequacies evident during the pandemic**
- the increased complexity of care required
- the need to encourage working integration between home care, LTC homes, hospitals, and community-based resource agencies.

What will your Party do to transform care and restore trust in LTC in Ontario and ensure that we will have the necessary quality care when and where it is needed?

How will your party ensure LTC homes meet minimum standards?

What role do you intend to play to address those challenges?

There is a public and political awareness of the need to address inadequacies in LTC. However, the focus has been on increasing ‘bed’ capacity. **Older adults are people, not occupants of beds. The need for access to culturally sensitive and age-appropriate community living environments must be addressed.** Residents have reported they want a home-like environment with input on the schedule, food, and recreational activities that are responsive to their needs and preferences.

What is your Party’s approach to person-centred care to maximize residents' abilities and recognize cultural differences?

Urgent concerns of older adults include the need to:

- improve staffing levels and care standards now
- shorten long waiting lists and times, reform the overregulated institutional model for homes
- strengthen public accountability and capacity in the LTC system and home and community care supports to respond to the growing needs of Ontario’s aging population.

How will your party assure adequate and appropriate staffing and continuing education for staff working in LTC facilities?

How will your Party engage and establish broader links with community resources to give residents a sense of community living?

These critical issues have resulted in a significant erosion of trust in Ontario’s LTC system. Older adults and their families now fear moving into LTC while receiving inadequate support and care while they wait for LTC.

Addressing the health human resource crisis and recognizing that health care for older adults is a specialized field	Questions to ask candidates
<p>Throughout the health care system, there is a growing shortage of trained health care resources, and in particular, nurses, personal support workers, and allied health workers who are essential for home, community, and long-term care. For example, a February 2022 survey by the Ontario Community Support Association reported that 14% of full-time personal support worker positions in home and community care were vacant. This has led to cancelled and delayed care for older adults as well as longer wait times for needed care while increasing pressures on family caregivers.</p>	<p>What will your Party do to ensure that needed health workers are trained, recruited, and retained to meet the needs of older adults?</p>
<p>Health workers are leaving the field because of the burden of working chronically short-staffed, inadequate wages and benefits, inequities of compensation across different settings, wage compression legislation, and poor working conditions.</p>	<p>What are your plans to support the creation and maintenance of stable full-time positions in the health system?</p>
<p>Develop a comprehensive Health Human Resource Strategy that includes funding for health care resources and that anticipates the changing needs of the growing aging population. The strategy needs to address the lack of capacity in caring for older adults with a focus on improving the quality of care for older adults who are frail and/or living with chronic health conditions through best practice guidelines, specialization of staff, and more extensive collaborative practices.</p>	<p>What will your Party do to encourage increased capacity and knowledge in the caring for older adults?</p>
<p>Wage parity issues must be examined. Increasing the number of trained health care workers with varied skills and competencies in caring for older adults across the entire continuum of care such as nurses, personal support workers and other allied health workers, must be a priority for Ontario.</p>	<p>What are your Party's plans to permanently address wage issues for front-line healthcare staff?</p> <p>How will your Party support continuing education for personal support workers and other health professionals?</p>

Priority #3: Creating inclusive, age-friendly communities with access to affordable and accessible housing and transportation

The Ontario housing crisis needs to be fixed. Home ownership costs are spiralling, rents have dramatically escalated, and the social housing stock is slowly diminishing, while the demand continues to rise. Older adults in the province—particularly those with low to moderate incomes—have been greatly affected by this housing crisis.

Ontario’s almost three million older adults represent a complex and dynamic cohort, with diverse living arrangements and housing needs. Over 90% of older adults want to “age in place and in the community.” However, as individuals age, they may experience challenges in finding suitable housing to accommodate their changing needs. These include difficulty in finding affordable, appropriate, and accessible housing; insufficient funds to modify their existing homes to accommodate changes in functionality and ability; and gaps in the availability of home-care services and supports that can help older adults age in place and in the community.

Housing Affordability

Home ownership costs are spiralling. Renters face high costs, often compounded by discrimination based on gender, race, age, and identity of origin.

In Ottawa, 25% of older adults are renters, of whom 54% spend 50% of their income on housing—far above the recommended affordability index of 30%. In Ottawa, the waiting list for social housing is over 12,000, with older adults making up 43% of this list (4,300 older adult households).

Older women and gender diverse populations are more likely to live alone and have low incomes, and therefore are more likely to live in core housing need. Action and investment are also needed to address housing inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous elders. The non-profit housing sector is an essential partner in providing subsidized homes that hundreds of thousands of Ontarians rely on for shelter and quality of life.

Questions to ask candidates

How will you increase the availability of age-friendly housing for older adults that is affordable, accessible, and appropriate especially for renters and those who live alone?

If elected, how many new affordable housing units will your party commit to build in the next five years? What is the amount your party is willing to invest in housing in Ottawa that is affordable, secure, and suitable for older adults and people of all ages?

Will your party support the non-profit housing sector in providing affordable and accessible housing options for older adults and people living with disability?



While older adults (age 50+) still make up a small percentage of the population experiencing homelessness in Ontario, they are the only group whose shelter usage has increased over the past decade. **Ottawa has seen a disturbing increase in the number of older women using shelters.** This is difficult for the resident and the shelter, since they are set up to serve younger women and children.

How will your party address the problem of homelessness and the increased use of shelters by all ages, including older women?

Between 2018 and 2046, the population of Ontarians aged 75+ is expected to double to 2.8 million people. **Most will live into very old age and at some point, require assisted living support beyond what can be provided in the community.** In the province, assisted living options (before entering LTC) is mainly provided by private retirement homes. According to CMHC, in retirement homes in Ontario, the median monthly rent for standard care is \$3,921 and \$6,092 for heavy care (more than 1.5 hours of care per day). This is unaffordable for most older adults and their families.

As people age, many will require assisted living accommodations where they get the support and services they need before qualifying for long-term care. There is a serious lack of affordable assisted living housing options in Ontario. Are you aware of this problem and how will you address it?

Housing Accessibility

Questions to ask candidates

Accessibility is a key factor to being able to live safely. Some 24% of Ontario's population has a disability, including more than 40% of people over age 65. As the population ages, these numbers will continue to increase. Accessible and adaptable housing applying universal design principles enables people of all ages and abilities to stay in their home and community as long as possible. Yet, most of these people have little or no access to age-friendly housing that is both affordable and accessible in the city and neighbourhood of their choice. Modifying existing homes to accommodate living with a disability can be very costly.

How will your Party work with other levels of government (local and federal) to ensure the housing needs of older adults and persons with disabilities are considered?

How will you help older adults and people living with disabilities make the necessary home modifications they need to stay in their community and age in place?

Will you mandate the application of universal design principles in all new housing projects?

Need for innovative options and appropriate housing/transportation for older adults

Questions to ask candidates

Appropriate housing for older adults is safe, in good repair and suitable in size (has enough bedrooms for the household). **Ideally, an older adult's home is situated in an age-friendly, inclusive community that has easy access to public transportation, shopping, community centres, clinics, and parks and green spaces.** Older adults want and need a sense of home and community belonging.

How will your party support older adults in planning for their future housing needs, whether that be programs to renovate their homes, find other housing options, or reduce financial barriers?

Research in Canada and other countries has shown there are numerous innovative, affordable housing alternatives that can meet these needs (for example, home-sharing, cooperative housing, intergenerational living, and Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities with Supportive Service Programs (NORC-SSP). **It is time for governments to think outside the box and support these innovative aging-in-community models, which are low cost and can help address the housing stock shortage for all ages.**

There are some exciting new housing projects in Ottawa including the Carlington Community Hub with 40 seniors' units that are accessible and affordable. What will your party do to encourage the development of more of these types of housing units?

How will you support other innovative housing options such as home-sharing (e.g., Hygge HomeSharing and Habitations Partagées Mirela, co-living, co-operatives and NORCs?

COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of living accommodations that encourage social interaction and reduce social isolation and are close to accessible public transportation.

If elected, what does your government intend to do to offset the costs of public and accessible transit and to improve access to adapted transportation?



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Disclaimer: This Guide is intended for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be a complete list of priorities of Ottawa's older adults. The views in this guide do not necessarily reflect the views of these funders.

This Guide is available in both languages at coottawa.ca.

Get Involved!

Your voice matters! As an older adult living in Ottawa, getting involved in the 2022 Provincial Election has never been easier! **A simple way to take part is to VOTE on June 2!**

Elections Ontario wants you to register to vote! Check out www.elections.on.ca for more information on how and where to vote.

Before the election you may wish to:

- Review the political platforms of registered parties in Ontario. A list of the parties with links can be found at elections.on.ca. Resources: [Ways to Vote](#), [Voting in Ontario](#), [Accessible Voting](#)
- Get familiar with the candidates in your electoral district. A list of candidates in each district is available through the [Elections Ontario Candidate Search tool](#).
- Together with National Association of Federal Retirees, the COA is inviting candidates to submit short video addressing key priorities of older adults. Links to candidates' video will be available through the COA website at coaottawa.ca.
- Request a meeting with local candidates to discuss your issues of concern.
- Write a formal letter or email to each of your local candidates and ask for their position on one or two issues of concern.
- 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 *2022 Provincial Election Guide: Priorities of Older Adults*.



**The Council
on Aging
of Ottawa**



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

For more information, go to www.coaottawa.ca

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

OUR MISSION: As a bilingual and inclusive Council, we work to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults