

Election 2021: Standing up for older adults in Nova Scotia

ABOUT THIS TOOL KIT

This kit aims to help branch volunteers with the National Association of Federal Retirees in Nova Scotia engage with candidates and represent the Association during the province's 2021 election.

In this toolkit, you'll find:

- Background information on the Association's priorities as they relate to your province.
- Key messages to help you make our priorities clear with candidates, friends, family and stakeholders in your communities.
- Questions to ask candidates (organized by party) that will help you and your members understand what each party is bringing to the table as they make their pitch to form Nova Scotia's next provincial government.

If you need support or have questions, contact advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca or connect with your province's advocacy program officer, Michelle Langille.

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 across Canada and almost 11,500 members in Nova Scotia, we have a proud history of nearly 60 years of advocacy on behalf of our members and retirees.

The National Association of Federal Retirees advocates in the best interest of its members, voicing support for secure, healthy and dignified retirements for federal retirees and all Canadians.

Federal Retirees is focused on advancing four priorities with all governments, political parties and candidates.

- Retirement income security
- National Seniors Strategy, particularly home care and long-term care
- Veteran well-being
- Pharmacare

These policy priorities are shared responsibilities between levels of government. Federal Retirees believes that all levels of government, from federal to municipal, have a role to play in responding to Canada's changing demographics and all levels of government have the responsibility to develop and implement better policies and programs for seniors now.

The ability to age well, 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 that quality home care and long-term care is available, medications are affordable, communities are accessible and age-inclusive and retirement incomes are secure.

This has never been more apparent than now, more than a year after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FEDERAL RETIREES AND THE NOVA SCOTIA 2021 ELECTION

Key messages

Older adults in Nova Scotia deserve an integrated continuum of health and community care that meets their unique needs at different stages of life.

In this election we ask the next provincial government to commit to:

- Collaborate with the federal government to implement a coordinated, comprehensive National Seniors Strategy, with dedicated funding and concrete, measurable goals, to support healthy aging in Nova Scotia.
- Work with the federal and provincial/territorial governments to establish enforced principles and national standards for home and long-term care, with appropriate funding tied to meeting those standards and respecting the principles behind them to ensure quality, safe, timely and comprehensive services.
- Keep older adults healthy and active by supporting age-friendly communities and investing in programs for older adults.

What are the issues?

Seniors are the fastest-growing demographic in Canada, and Nova Scotia is 4 percent above the national average. With more than 21 per cent of Nova Scotians age 65 or older, the province has the third-highest proportion in Canada. This is a demographic that will continue to increase in the coming years and decades.

Gaps in health care, pharmacare and social policies create barriers to independence for older adults and the essential role they play in vibrant, healthy communities and economies. Across the country, COVID-19 has highlighted long-standing issues with long-term care that have only intensified peoples' desire to age at home.

While Nova Scotia and its health-care system weren't as hard-hit by the pandemic as other parts of the country, the province's experience during COVID-19 should serve as a very serious warning that how we provide health care needs to change.

The protective measures in Nova Scotia have been highly successful, and the 'Atlantic bubble' formed in collaboration with the Atlantic provinces is an important example of what collaboration among provinces can accomplish. This is the kind of provincial leadership that's needed in the fight to develop and implement shared principles and enforced national standards for long-term care across Canada.

This election is an opportunity to champion innovative ideas to improve the health-care system and rethink older adult care and social services for the better.

The well-being of older adults in Nova Scotia now and for years to come depends on a commitment from the next provincial government to support healthy aging and prioritize a coordinated, comprehensive seniors strategy.

A national seniors strategy is needed to integrate policies along a continuum to address pressing issues affecting older adults, including:

- ageism, social isolation, and elder abuse
- healthy living
- a continuum of care closer to home, spanning needs from home to long-term care
- support for informal caregivers

Tackling these issues independently will not deliver the results we need. The shifting demographics in our communities require leadership from all levels of government to ensure policies and programs meet the needs of older adults.



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A PLAN FOR ENGAGED AND HEALTHY AGING

Maintaining independence, productivity, and engagement in the community

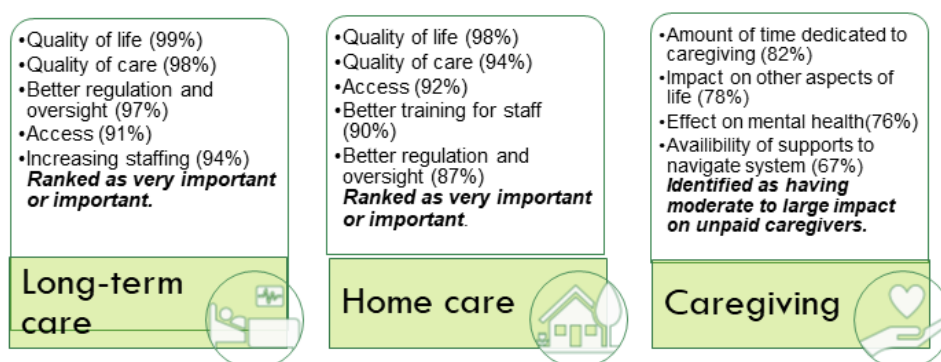
- Social isolation, elder abuse, ageism and a lack of age-friendly services can worsen quality of life, and lead to poor health outcomes, higher social costs and the loss of vital economic and social contributions from older populations.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the social conditions in our communities. Social isolation must be addressed to ensure older adults continue to thrive in their communities.

Quality health care where and when you need it

- Ensuring an integrated continuum of care (that is, coordinated and continuous across health-care services and settings) close to home is vital so that Nova Scotians can access the care they need in comfortable and familiar settings in their communities.
- Most Nova Scotians want to age at home and need proper support to do so. We need a health-care system that prioritizes options for older adults to remain at home, connected to their communities, while ensuring access to the full continuum of care.
- Informal caregivers are a cornerstone to health and well-being and the health-care system. There are associated costs to caregiving, with impacts on careers and personal finances as well as physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. Increasing home care and community alternatives cannot be done at the expense of informal caregivers. Informal caregivers need to be respected as an integral part of the health-care system, with proper support and training.
- Standards of care are inconsistent. Older adults should count on quality, accessible health care when and where they need it. Access to comprehensive and safe home, community and long-term care should not depend on your postal code

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 and experiences on three key areas during the COVID-19 pandemic: long-term care, home care and caregiving.



views of respondents with personal experience in each area



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CONNECT WITH YOUR CANDIDATES

During Nova Scotia's provincial election, you may have an opportunity to engage with candidates and/or political party members and officials — all while keeping a safe physical distance, because the COVID-19 pandemic is not over, 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 or community groups.

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

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

Note that these questions are organized by party. While the questions are similar, there are some subtle differences in how we recommend approaching each issue with the various parties and in the topics we'd like to question the parties on in more detail. Be sure to use the correct set of questions for the candidate in front of you!

Liberal Party of Nova Scotia

1. The impacts of ageism and social isolation were undeniable before the COVID-19 pandemic and have only worsened for some Nova Scotians, particularly older adults. Social isolation can lead to poor health outcomes and a lower quality of life.

How will the Liberal party, and you, work to ensure an age-friendly focus in Nova Scotia's public policy and ensure that seniors have the social and financial support they need to be empowered to stay socially included, active and engaged?

2. What will the Liberal party do to increase the social connection of older Nova Scotians within their communities?

3. During the Nova Scotia Liberal party leadership campaign, Mr. Rankin promised to increase investments and modernized health care.

What exactly does this mean? How will the Liberal party ensure that seniors have the right care, at the right time, in the right place, so that options are available to meet the needs of Nova Scotia's aging population?

4. A few weeks before his resignation, the former leader of the Nova Scotia Liberal party, the Hon. Stephen McNeil stated: "If the federal government is going to provide funding for long-term care, it would make sense that they should know how it's being spent."

Will the Liberal party commit to collaborate with the federal government and your provincial/territorial counterparts to establish national standards of care in home and long-term care to improve the safety and quality of services for seniors? If so, how will the Liberal party advance that? If not – why not?

5. Advocates from across the country have been calling for a comprehensive national seniors strategy to address older adult care, the social determinants of health (housing, transport, income security), caregiver support and age-friendly communities. The government of Nova Scotia has an essential role to play in addressing these issues and cannot simply wait for the federal government to act.

Does the Liberal party support a national seniors strategy, and will it encourage the federal government to lead its implementation? If so, how will the Liberal party advance this? If not, why?

Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia

1. The impacts of ageism and social isolation were undeniable before the COVID-19 pandemic and have only worsened for some Nova Scotians, particularly older adults. Social isolation can lead to poor health outcomes and a lower quality of life.

How will the Progressive Conservative party, and you, work to ensure an age-friendly focus in Nova Scotia's public policy and assure that seniors have the social and financial support they need to be empowered to stay socially included, active and engaged?



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2. What will you/your party do to increase the social connection of older Nova Scotians within their communities?

3. In the document “Dignity for our Seniors,” the Progressive Conservative party detailed its plan for seniors’ health care. While increasing beds, addressing human resources challenges and developing “supportive living” are all welcomed initiatives, they do not tackle the ageing population’s challenges, nor do they address the non-health concerns of older adults or the systemic issues in the long-term care sector.

How will the Progressive Conservative party ensure that seniors have the right care, at the right time, in the right place, so that options are available to meet the needs of Nova Scotia’s aging population?

4. Last summer, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia sent a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau, asking for a commitment to provide funds for the party’s “Dignity for our Seniors” policy project. While direct agreements between the federal government and individual provinces can be helpful, we need provincial leaders to help implement national standards in long-term care facilities across the whole country.

Will the Progressive Conservative party commit to collaborate with the federal government and provincial/territorial counterparts to establish national standards of care in home and long-term care to improve the safety and quality of services for seniors? If so, how will the Progressive Conservative party advance that? If not — why not?

5. Advocates from across the country have been calling for a comprehensive national seniors strategy to address older adult care, the social determinants of health (housing, transport, income security), caregiver support and age-friendly communities. The government of Nova Scotia has an essential role to play in addressing these issues and cannot simply wait for the federal government to act.

Does the Progressive Conservative party support a national seniors strategy, and will it encourage the federal government to lead its implementation? If so, how will the Progressive Conservative Party advance this? If not — why?

New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia

1. The impacts of ageism and social isolation were undeniable before the COVID-19 pandemic and have only worsened for some Nova Scotians, particularly older adults. Social isolation can lead to poor health outcomes and a lower quality of life.

How will the New Democratic Party, and you, work to ensure an age-friendly focus in Nova Scotia’s public policy and assure that seniors have the social and financial support they need to be empowered to stay socially included, active and engaged?

2. What will the New Democratic Party do to increase the social connection of older Nova Scotians within their communities?

3. How will the New Democratic Party ensure that seniors have the right care, at the right time, in the right place, so that options are available to meet the needs of Nova Scotia’s aging population?

4. Will the New Democratic Party commit to collaborate with the federal government and provincial/territorial counterparts to establish national standards of care in home and long-term care to improve the safety and quality of services for seniors? If so, how will the New Democratic Party advance that? If not — why not?

5. Advocates from across the country have been calling for a comprehensive national seniors strategy to address older adult care, the social determinants of health (housing, transport, income security), caregiver support and age-friendly communities. The government of Nova Scotia has an essential role to play in addressing these issues and cannot simply wait for the federal government to act.

Does the New Democratic Party support a national seniors strategy, and will it encourage the federal government to lead its implementation? If so, how will the New Democratic Party advance this? If not — why?



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