



National Association
of Federal Retirees

Association nationale
des retraités fédéraux

David Johnston, Commissioner of the Leaders' Debates Commission
Michel Cormier, Executive of the Leaders' Debates Commission

August 26, 2021

Dear Sirs,

Canada's 44th federal election is taking place during one of the worst humanitarian crises our country has ever experienced – the COVID-19 pandemic. Canadians in long-term care, particularly older adults, suffered disproportionately during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Canadians lost older relatives in tragic and traumatizing circumstances. No one will forget the first-hand accounts of long-term care residents struggling to receive basic care, and Canadian military personnel doing their best to bring aid and comfort to those who suffered.

The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the elderly has once again highlighted the need to address the crisis Canada faces in terms of providing long term care for its senior population.

We ask that you consider the following facts when formulating questions for the leaders' debates.

- By 2030, adults aged 65 and older will make up 23 per cent of Canada's population and number over 9.5 million. This makes older adults the fastest growing segment of Canada's population.
- In 2018, it was estimated that more than 430,000 adult Canadians have unmet home care needs, while more than 40,000 Canadians are on waiting lists for long-term care homes due, in part, to a lack of available home and community-based care.
- It is estimated that by 2035 an additional 199,000 long-term care beds will be needed to accommodate new demand, which is nearly double the number of beds available in 2017.
- Women account for approximately 55 per cent of seniors aged 65 and older and for approximately 61 per cent of those 80 years and older.
- Today, with Canadians' average life expectancy pegged at 80 years, physicians believe an individual can reach age 65 without major complications and can realistically look forward to 20 more years of life, 17 of them in good health.

There have been many conversations about the future of long-term and home care in Canada since the pandemic's onset, but insufficient coverage of this issue since the election writs were issued.

During this federal election campaign, it is important to honor the thousands of elderly Canadians who died from COVID-19 and to remember that 425,000 Canadians often still live under difficult conditions in under-funded long term care facilities.



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Canadians expect our next federal government to address older adult care, and it is in the public interest to have this matter covered by the upcoming Leaders' Debates.

The National Association of Federal Retirees has been seized by the issue of long-term care. Many of our members are themselves thinking of the next phase of their lives, are often caregivers for ageing loved ones and believe in advocating for those who are in long-term care and no longer have the ability to do so themselves.

We ask that the Debates Commission include the following questions to the party leaders during its upcoming leaders debates on September 8 and 9:

- The long standing problems with LTC highlighted by COVID-19 have only intensified peoples' desire to age at home. How will your government improve older adult care and ensure comprehensive, timely, quality LTC, home and community care, in collaboration with provinces and territories?
- Do you support national principles and enforceable standards, tied to accountable funding, for long-term and homecare?
- A series of one-time funding initiatives relating to older adult care were announced during 2020 and 2021. What is your plan for longer term sustained funding and transformation of older adult care in this country?

Thank you for your consideration of these very important questions.

Sincerely,

Jean-Guy Soulière
President

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cc: Members of the Advisory Board of the Leaders' Debates Commission
Dr. Chad Gaffield
The Honourable Deborah Grey
Ms. Megan Leslie
The Honourable John Manley
The Honourable Louise Otis
Mr. Abdullah Snobar