



ABOUT FEDERAL RETIREES

The National Association of Federal Retirees (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 (RCMP) and retired federally appointed judges, as well as their partners and survivors. With close to 170,000 members in Canada, including nearly 32,000 in Quebec, our Association has been advocating for improvements to the financial security, health and well-being of our members and all Canadians since 1963.

The National Association of Federal Retirees represents the best interests of its members through initiatives that support a secure, healthy and dignified retirement for federal retirees and all Canadians. This work is more important now than ever as the percentage of seniors aged 65 and over in Quebec increased from 16 per cent to 20.6 per cent between 2011 and 2021. The 65+ age group is the fastest growing segment of the Quebec population. Seniors have needs that differ from those of other population groups, so it is time to make some crucial changes that will allow the province of Quebec to better integrate, serve and care for its aging population.

FEDERAL RETIREES AND THE 2022 QUEBEC PROVINCIAL ELECTION

The past 2 1/2 years have been difficult and too often tragic for Quebec seniors and their families. The social isolation that many were already experiencing intensified and became more widespread. Their health and access to health-care services have been severely impacted.

We know that Quebec's health-care system is in bad shape; a reality that has been in the news for years. The system needs to be restructured and significant investments need to be made to provide accessible, quality health care and social services. Quebec needs a clear plan to ensure that its health-care system can meet the needs of an aging population that deserves to be treated with dignity. Seniors must be involved in policy decisions that affect their well-being and care.

The next Quebec government must commit to a significant investment in care and services for seniors, the implementation of a seniors strategy and the restoration and modernization of the health-care system.

It is time to change our perspective on aging.

It is time to invest in the dignity and well-being of seniors. After 2 1/2 years of tragedy, we should be able to learn from our mistakes and make the societal changes we need to correct them, and this provincial election is our opportunity to do so.

KEY MESSAGES

In this election, we are asking the next provincial government to commit to:

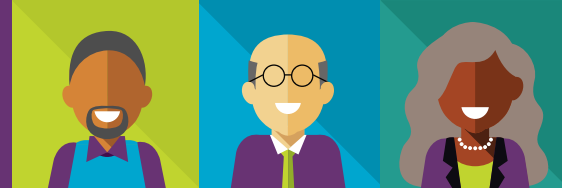
- Significant investments into seniors care and services within a continuum of care framework.
- Implementing a seniors strategy based on the social determinants of health.
- Renewing and modernizing the health-care system and front-line services.

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Federal Retirees is calling for all parties to commit to the following in the 2022 Quebec provincial election:

1. Investing meaningfully in seniors care and services from a continuum of care perspective, including:
 - Investing in the strengthening of home care and support services.
 - Enhancing all programs that support the work of informal caregivers and improve their well-being (financial, psychological and logistical support).
 - Investing in the development of living environments for seniors that are integrated into the community: senior housing, alternative housing and intermediate residences.
2. Establishing a provincial seniors strategy based on the social determinants of health, guaranteed, supervised and monitored by a person appointed by the national assembly. This appointee would be responsible for, among other things:
 - Fighting ageism and social isolation (surveys, advertising, reports, recommendations).
 - Ensuring that the dignity of all seniors is respected and that seniors have access to the greatest possible autonomy as well as adequate income, affordable housing and transportation, high-quality health-care services and meaningful community connection.
 - Investigating complaints and publishing both the results of these investigations and the ensuing recommendations.





- Investing meaningfully in the renewal and modernization of the health-care system and front-line services by:
 - Providing all Quebecers with access to a family doctor and front-line health professionals.
 - Improving the working conditions (pay and hours) of nurses and support staff in the health-care system in general and urgently in all CHSLDs (private [P], private contracted [PC] and non-contracted private [NCP]).
 - Establishing strict management standards for all CHSLDs (P, PC, and NCP) with penalties (care, working conditions, condition of the facilities).

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long-standing problems in health and senior care, causing devastating situations in long-term care homes and similar facilities, as well as for seniors and vulnerable populations in general. Governments can no longer ignore these problems.

The pandemic has shown that not everyone is equal when it comes to illness. The availability of care and services, living conditions, working conditions, facility conditions and the decision-making processes in times of crisis must be standardised.

While we all expected the pandemic to end as abruptly as it began, it is becoming increasingly clear that we will likely have to live with waves of infections for years to come. Therefore, we will need to adapt the health system to this new reality, particularly when it comes to delays in medical and surgical procedures and to the mental health and social effects of the restrictive measures introduced to slow the spread of the virus.

While COVID-19 is a barrier to a well-functioning health-care system, it also presents an opportunity to transform our health and social care system, particularly for seniors.

The social determinants of health — that is, physical and mental health, income, housing, transportation, nutrition and community integration, among others — are usually considered in isolation. Related policies are then developed by different departments and levels of government without adequate planning or coordination and without considering the impact these policies have on one another.

A seniors strategy provides a framework that covers the most important policies for seniors and places them on a continuum. A seniors strategy framework addresses all aspects of aging within a community. The well-being of Quebec seniors, now and in the future, depends on the next government's commitment to developing a comprehensive strategy for them.

1. INVESTING IN HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Federal Retirees is calling on all parties to commit to a meaningful investment in seniors' care and services within a continuum of care perspective, including:

- Investing in the strengthening of home care and support services.
- Enhancing all programs that support the work of informal caregivers and improve their well-being (financial, psychological and logistical support).
- Investing in the development of living environments for seniors that are integrated into the community: senior housing, alternative housing and intermediate residences.

As governments change, so do their policies, programs and action plans, often without ever solving the problem. For example, in 2012, under Premier Charest, the Quebec government presented a national policy and a five-year action plan 2012–2017, entitled *Aging and Living Together: At Home, in One's Community, in Québec*. This is a national policy for seniors founded on bolstering home-support services and ensuring community integration among seniors. Six years later, the government of Philippe Couillard presented its next five-year action plan entitled *A Quebec for All Ages: 2018-2023 Action Plan* (in French: *Un Québec pour tous les âges, le plan d'action 2018-2023*). Rather than building on the first plan, Couillard's government offered one that was essentially the same. This doesn't mean that there has been no progress at all, but it is worth noting that the second plan would be quite different if the province had followed through on the first.

Recently, under the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), the Quebec government announced major investments in home care and support, as well as in the development of living environments for seniors that are integrated into the community. To that end, the CAQ government has also announced a national policy and its own five-year action plan entitled *Living Environments in Our Image: Housing and Long-term Care Policy* (in French: *Des milieux de vie qui nous ressemblent, politique d'hébergement et de soins de services de longue durée*).

Last year, the Quebec government also announced a policy entitled *National Policy for Caregivers: Recognizing and Supporting Respectfully the Wishes and Capacities of Commitment* (in French: *La politique nationale pour les personnes proches aidantes : Reconnaître et soutenir dans le respect des volontés et des capacités d'engagement*). This national policy for family caregivers was accompanied by a five-year action plan entitled *Government Action Plan for Caregivers 2021-26: Recognize to Better Support* (in French: *Plan d'action gouvernemental pour les personnes proches*





aidantes 2021-2026 - Reconnaître pour mieux soutenir). , which was also supported by the announcement of investments in the 2022-23 Quebec budget.

Obviously, we hope that the next government, regardless of its political allegiance, will respect these commitments to Quebec seniors and their families, but the cycle of government announcements, elections and election promises being what it is, we can welcome the effort, while remaining sceptical until the policies are put in place and the funds released.

2. TIME FOR A SENIORS STRATEGY

Federal Retirees is calling on all parties to commit to establishing a provincial seniors strategy based on the social determinants of health and that it be guaranteed, supervised and monitored by a person appointed by the national assembly. This appointee would be responsible for, among other things:

- Fighting ageism and social isolation (surveys, advertising, reports, recommendations).
- Ensuring that the dignity of all seniors is respected and that seniors have access to the greatest possible autonomy as well as adequate income, affordable housing and transportation, high-quality health-care services and meaningful community connection.
- Investigating complaints and publishing both the results of these investigations and the ensuing recommendations.

By 2031, adults aged 65 and over will make up 25.2 per cent of the population of Quebec, or more than a quarter of the province's population. Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the population, but gaps in social policy and health care create barriers to their independence and to the essential role they play in healthy, vibrant communities and economies.

The social determinants of health — that is, physical and mental health, income, housing, transportation, nutrition, and community integration, among others — are typically examined in isolation. Related policies are then developed by different departments and levels of government without adequate planning or coordination and without considering the impact these policies have on one another

A coordinated seniors strategy, guaranteed and overseen by a national assembly appointee, with dedicated funding and clear objectives, would meet the changing needs of Quebec seniors. Federal Retirees calls for a seniors strategy that focuses on improving the quality of life of Quebec seniors through income security, access to affordable and appropriate housing and transportation, inclusive communities and quality health care, as well

as improved community and home care.

But for a strategy like this to work, considering that it has to coordinate several policies and programs from different departments, it needs to be overseen by a body independent of the government.

In Quebec, this role could be assumed by a person appointed by the national assembly. At the federal level, the equivalent role is called a *senior official of the Government of Canada*. This is a role endorsed by a two-thirds vote of the national assembly. There are five representatives appointed by the national assembly in Quebec: the ethics commissioner, the lobbyists commissioner, the chief electoral officer, the public protector and the auditor general. As the ombudsman of Quebec, the public protector is already mandated to receive complaints about the government and its departments and to submit annual and ad hoc reports based on its investigations. The public protector is also responsible for appointing two deputy ombudsmen. One of them, the health and social services ombudsman, is mandated to perform the functions of an ombudsman in the realms of health and social services. To better serve seniors, the mandate of the public protector could be expanded and include the appointment of a third deputy ombudsman, who would be the ombudsman for seniors.

3. MODERNIZING THE HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM

Federal Retirees is calling on all parties to commit to major investments to renew and modernize the health-care system and front-line services by:

- Providing all Quebecers with access to a family doctor and front-line health professionals.
- Improving the working conditions (pay and hours) of nurses and support staff in the health-care system in general and urgently in all CHSLDs (P, PC, NCP).
- Establishing strict management standards for all CHSLDs (P, PC, and NCP) with penalties (care, working conditions, condition of the facilities).

It is well known that the Quebec health and social services system is not adequately meeting demand. Currently, more than one million Quebecers do not have a family doctor. In 2019, the Canadian average of individuals without “regular care providers” was 14.5 per cent, while in Quebec it was 21.5 per cent, followed by British Columbia and Saskatchewan, whose averages were 17.7 per cent and 17.2 per cent, respectively.

The CAQ government committed to reducing the list by 250,000





names by the end of July 2022. However, since that announcement two months ago, the government has only managed to remove 26,000 people from the list, leaving 224,000 to be addressed by July 31. The government insists that it will meet its target and reduce the list by a further 250,000 names by March 2023.

That said, it is one thing to have a family doctor, but it is another thing entirely to have access to one in a timely manner. The government's primary strategy seems to be to increase the number of patients per doctor and to refer patients to groups of family doctors and super clinics, which is not the same as having access to a family doctor who ensures long-term follow-up care.

Working conditions in the health and social services system are problematic. A study by the Institut national de la santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) shows that one out of every two employees in the health system experienced psychological distress. In 80 per cent of cases, it was work-related. Of course, the pandemic has exacerbated the problem, but in 2014-15, when the INSPQ conducted the last major study on this issue, nearly one worker in three said they were experiencing psychological distress. In August 2020, the National Association of Federal Retirees surveyed its members, specifically about long-term care. The results are clear: over 91 per cent of respondents believe that reforms to improve quality of care, quality of life, access, staff-to-resident ratios, as well as regulations and monitoring are needed in long-term care facilities.

The Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services, ombudsman and chief coroner have all made recommendations in their reports on their investigations into the COVID-19 pandemic in Quebec's CHSLDs¹³. While not necessarily the most important factor in the first wave of tragic deaths, all their reports and recommendations mention the working conditions, lack of staff, lack of training, ratio of patients to health professionals, placement agencies and so on. If the government wants to improve the living conditions of long-term care residents, it must necessarily improve the working conditions of the employees.

These reports also mention the lack of standards and of well-defined emergency processes as well as the sometimes chaotic management of logistics and supplies, outdated facilities and a lack of monitoring and consequences for non-compliance. The government needs to introduce new, strict standards and ensure that they are not only met in all types of retirement residences but also that there are appropriate penalties.

CONNECTING WITH CANDIDATES

During the Quebec general election, you may have the opportunity to engage with candidates and party members. This may include calls from candidates, door-to-door canvassing by political party volunteers, radio call-in shows and public telephone or internet forums offered through election campaigns or community groups.

You can also contact your local candidates by phone or email or on social media.

If you have the opportunity, ask your local candidates questions about the issues discussed in this document and send us a brief email at advocacy@federalretirees.ca, to let us know your candidates' answers!

