



A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR AGING IN NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia will head to the polls on Nov. 26. During this election, Federal Retirees is calling on the province's next government to improve older adult care and create a healthier future for aging in Nova Scotia.

This work is more important now than ever before.

By 2030, adults aged 65 or older will make up 23 per cent of Canada's population and number over 9.5 million. And more than one in four Nova Scotians will be aged 65 and over.

According to the 2021 Census — the most recent year for which this data is available — 22.2 per cent of the Nova Scotia population is aged 65 or older currently. In Nova Scotia, as in all Atlantic provinces, older adults represent a higher proportion of the population than in the rest of Canada.

Older adults deserve to age with dignity, and it's time to create a healthier future for aging in Nova Scotia.

This provincial election is our chance to do that.

KEY MESSAGES

During this election, Federal Retirees is calling for Nova Scotia's next provincial government to:

- Ensure Nova Scotians' incomes keep up with the cost of living.
- Enable aging in place by ensuring timely access to needed supports.
- Improve access to care through provision of funding and services.
- Enforce mandatory long-term care standards.

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 more than 170,000 members from coast to coast to coast, including more than 11,000 in Nova Scotia, Federal Retirees has advocated for improvements to the financial security, health and well-being of our members and all Canadians since 1963.

THE ISSUES

Ensure Nova Scotians' incomes keep up with cost-of-living increases

Life — and especially housing — is becoming unaffordable. The next government must take on measures that will make it easier for Nova Scotians to make ends meet.

With record inflation in recent years, older Nova Scotians have seen their purchasing power dwindle, particularly with substantial increases to rent, groceries, utilities, and medication. Rising prices have made things especially difficult for older adults on a fixed income.

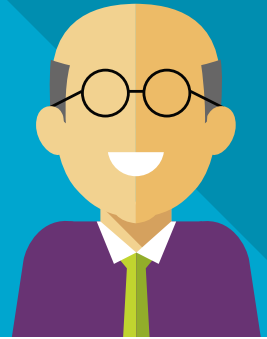
The government of Nova Scotia reports 19.7 per cent of women, and 14.7 per cent of men, aged 65 and over live in low income households.

Canadians deserve dignity and security in retirement. Nova Scotia's next government must prioritize retirement income security by developing strong policies that support and protect pensions and retirement benefits. One of the best tools to ensure that retirees have some protection against the rise of cost-of-living is defined benefit pension plans, most of which have indexation which increases pension benefits as the cost-of-living increases.

In recent polling conducted by Angus Reid, 62 per cent of Nova Scotians have said the increased cost-of-living is their top concern. In addition, 39 per cent said housing affordability is a top concern.

Access to affordable and appropriate housing is a well-known social determinant of health — having a safe and affordable home means people are more likely to be healthy. And most older adults want to age in place, in their own communities. However, with rising house prices, along with inflation pressures and limited housing supply, many older adults are having trouble staying in or finding appropriate, affordable and safe housing.





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At the end of 2023, Nova Scotia recorded the highest rate of rent inflation in Canada – at 14.1 per cent. Housing costs in Nova Scotia have risen faster recently than at any time since data collection began in 1979. Many older adults find themselves facing difficult decisions, with rising housing costs cutting into their fixed income that is already stretched to cover essentials like food and medical expenses.

About half of the 7,020 households on Nova Scotia's wait-list for public housing are composed of seniors. Seniors also compose more than half of the 1,800 low-income residents living in Nova Scotia's 11,200 public housing units.

The next government must ensure Nova Scotia's incomes keep up with cost-of-living increases by protecting and encouraging more defined benefit pension plans and prioritizing investments that specifically support access to housing for older Canadians.

Enable aging in place

More than 215,000 Nova Scotians are aged 65 or older. Most older adults want to age in place, at home, in their communities.

Older adults represent the fastest-growing segment of the population. But gaps in healthcare and social policies are putting barriers in the way of their independence and undermining their role in maintaining vibrant, healthy communities and economies.

Community and home care enable people to live at home, remain safe and independent and improve or maintain their health and quality of life through supports ranging from nursing to personal care to homemaking. Unpaid caregivers play an essential role in enabling aging in place; caregivers deserve financial and other support such as respite to fulfill this role.

Nova Scotia's next government must maintain and improve current programs that provide older persons the opportunity to age in place.

Improve access to care

The Canada Health Act guarantees that access to health care services is a fundamental right for all Canadians. And access to a primary care provider is key to healthy aging. Primary care is the foundation of the health care system, yet it is strained, and access to primary care is a challenge for many Nova Scotians.

Doctors Nova Scotia reports there are more than 160,000 Nova Scotians currently on a waitlist for a family physician.

In addition, while Canadians consistently experience long delays in accessing care, Nova Scotia's total wait time for medically necessary care is now 56.7 weeks. Nova Scotia also trails the rest of the country on non-emergency surgery wait times.

Consistent primary care is essential to manage health, and without it, Nova Scotians are increasingly winding up in emergency rooms, with severe or more complex conditions that are harder to treat. Nova Scotians' well-being, quality of life and health outcomes are suffering, and unpaid caregivers are stretched to the limit. Nova Scotians need access to appropriate care where they live.

Nova Scotia's next government must invest in the continuum of care, from primary to home to long-term care, address wait times, and improve navigation of the public health care system.

Enforce mandatory standards for long-term care

In response to the devastating conditions in long-term care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, Federal Retirees called on all levels of government to collaborate on a national review of long-term care.

In early 2023, national long-term care standards were announced.





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These standards were developed under the leadership of Dr. Samir Sinha, who acted as chair of the technical committee that developed the standards with collaboration between the Health Standards Organization (HSO) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

The standards were developed with a rigorous, evidence-based process, led by experts and with the full participation of people with lived experience, with multiple public and focused consultations. The resulting standards provide a minimum standard of care and service delivery along with infection prevention and control.

The mandate for the project did not require adoption of the new standards to become mandatory. That's why we are asking governments to implement the standards.

In 2023, new long-term standards in Nova Scotia were introduced, with the aim to improve the quality of care for residents in long-term care facilities. These standards are voluntary. Increased government support is necessary to effectively implement these standards and address ongoing challenges in long-term care homes.

It is imperative that the Nova Scotia's government act to ensure not only that long-term settings are regulated and inspected, but also that standards meet or exceed the national standards and are enforced.

Nova Scotia's next government must ensure Nova Scotia's long-term care homes follow mandatory standards which are reviewed and enforced.

TALKING TO CANDIDATES

You never know when you'll get a chance to ask candidates or their campaigners about their positions on the issues most important to older adults in Nova Scotia. Keep this sheet handy. These questions are friendly conversation starters, and you can use the information shared here as quick speaking points when you connect with candidates and their campaigners. And remember, you can always ask follow-up questions if the answer is unclear or you want to know more!

1. Older adults are a fast-growing demographic in Nova Scotia. What is your party's strategy to meet older adults' needs?
2. How will you make life more affordable for Nova Scotians?
3. How will party ensure that defined benefit plans, the best way to make sure retirees have a secure long-term income in retirement, are protected and encouraged in Nova Scotia?
4. How will your party ensure Nova Scotians have access to the affordable housing they need?
5. How will your party support older adults in Nova Scotia to age in place?
6. How will you ensure the work of caregivers is recognized and supported?
7. What is your party's plan to ensure Nova Scotians' have access to a family doctor through our public health care system?
8. How will your party invest in public health care and improve the continuum of health care services for Nova Scotians?
9. How will your party ensure Nova Scotia's long-term care homes are held to a high standard of care?
10. Will your party commit to enforcing long-term care standards?

- And be sure to follow-up and ask candidates and their campaigners when they'll follow through on their promises to older adults in Nova Scotia.

