

# Election 2021: Standing up for older adults in Newfoundland and Labrador

## 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 more than 3,200 members in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a proud 56-year history 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
- Veteran well-being
- Pharmacare
- National Seniors Strategy, particularly home care and long-term care

These policy priorities are shared responsibilities between governments. Federal Retirees believes that all levels of government, from federal to municipal, have a role to play in response to Canada's changing demographics.

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

That's never been more apparent than now, nearly a year after the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

## FEDERAL RETIREES AND THE NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR 2021 ELECTION

### Key messages

**Older adults in Newfoundland and Labrador 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:

- Work with the federal and provincial/territorial governments to **establish national standards for home and long-term care**, with appropriate funding tied to meeting those standards, and 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.
- 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 Newfoundland and Labrador.



### CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

1-855-304-4700 | [advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca](mailto:advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca)

[federalretirees.ca](http://federalretirees.ca)



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## What are the issues?

Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in Newfoundland and Labrador. Older adults aged 65 and over represent almost 20 per cent of the population. And it's a demographic that's going to grow. Residents aged 65+ will represent approximately 27 per cent of the population by 2026.

Gaps in healthcare, 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 has only intensified peoples' desire to age at home .

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Newfoundland and Labrador's healthcare system. The protective measures in Newfoundland and Labrador 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.

The long-term care sector in this province has not seen the same tragic infection and death rates as in other provinces. However, the situation in long-term care homes in Ontario, Québec and the western provinces should make everyone take the systemic problems in senior care and long-term care seriously. These are issues that need to be tackled now.

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.

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

The well-being of older adults in Newfoundland and Labrador 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.

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.

## 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.
- 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 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can access the care they need in comfortable and familiar settings in their communities.
- Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to age at home and need proper support to do so. We need a health-care system that prioritizes options to enable older adults to remain connected to their communities, while ensuring access to the full continuum of care.



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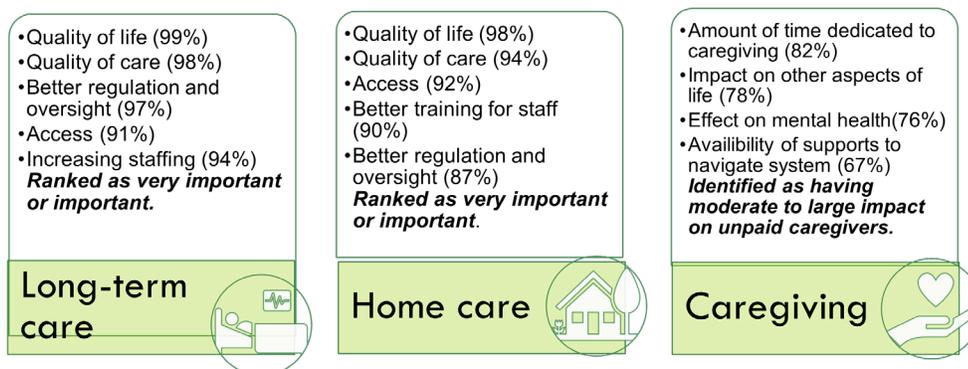
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- There is a growing need for new and better trained health and social service providers, working in interdisciplinary teams to provide community care. The Seniors Advocate in Newfoundland and Labrador has noted the importance of expanding primary health-care teams in the province. As in most of Canada, a lack of geriatric expertise in Newfoundland and Labrador will leave older adults with unmet health care needs.
- Informal caregivers are a cornerstone to health and well-being and the health-care system. There are associated costs to caregiving, with impacts to 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 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 FEDERAL RETIREES ON OLDER ADULT CARE AND COVID-19

In August 2020, Federal Retirees surveyed its members to better understand their views and experiences with respect to three key areas during the COVID-19 pandemic: long-term care, home care and caregiving.

#### Views of respondents with personal experience in each area



### CONNECT WITH YOUR CANDIDATES

During Newfoundland and Labrador’s provincial election, you may have an opportunity to engage with candidates and/or political party members and officials – keeping a safe physical distance, 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 by phone or email, or on social media.

If you have a chance, ask your local candidates about the following issues – and send a short email to [advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca](mailto:advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca) to let us know how your candidates answered!

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



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2. What will you/your party do to increase the social connection of older Newfoundlanders and Labradorians within their communities?
3. How will you/your 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 Newfoundland and Labrador's aging population?
4. Will your 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?
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 Newfoundland and Labrador has an essential role to play in addressing these issues and cannot simply wait for the federal government to act.

Does your party support a national seniors strategy, and will it encourage the federal government to lead its implementation?

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