



## A BETTER WAY FORWARD FOR AGING IN ONTARIO

### KEY MESSAGE

Older Ontarians have disproportionately suffered during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic and Ontario needs a plan for older adult care – one that fixes the cracks we’ve seen worsen during the pandemic, addresses the pandemic’s consequences, and leads to healthier future for aging in Ontario.

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The last two years have been challenging for older Ontarians and their families – and for too many, tragic. Their health and access to health care have been hit hard. Ontario needs a plan to ensure older adults can access safe, high-quality health care when they need it the most.

Older adults must be involved in policy decisions that impact their wellbeing and care. Ontario’s next government must commit to an independent senior’s advocate and a comprehensive seniors’ strategy that encourages age-positive wellbeing and age-friendly communities. It’s time to address healthy ageing, deteriorating access to health care, and better home care and long-term care – and this provincial election is our moment to make that happen.

### THE CHALLENGES

#### Safe, quality home care and long-term care

Every Ontarian deserves to age with dignity in their own home, in their own community. Community means connectedness, and the familiarity of home is a source of comfort and security. Publicly funded home and community care have the capacity to improve health care delivery and outcomes, and reduce costs, but governments continuously fail to recognize and fund home care so that it is available and effective.

Long-term care is important to the health care continuum, and the pandemic devastated long-term care residents and their

support networks. In April 2020, Ontario asked the Canadian Armed Forces for help as COVID-19 ravaged long-term care; the military reported on the horrifying conditions they observed in the worst-hit homes, citing terrible abuse and neglect of residents. Estimates have found that while long-term care residents made up for about 20 percent of COVID-19 cases in Ontario, 65 percent of Ontario’s pandemic deaths occurred in long-term care, and regulation and oversight of the long-term care sector was insufficient in the lead up to the pandemic.

This should never have happened – and it must not happen again.

***Ontario needs home and community care, as well as long-term care standards with better regulation, oversight, accountability, and transparency, to deliver better care and outcomes.***

#### Age-positive wellbeing

By 2030, adults aged 65 or older will make up 23 per cent of Canada’s population and number over 9.5 million. From 2019 to 2023, Ontario’s senior population will grow by about 400,000.

Older adults represent the fastest growing segment of the population, but gaps in our healthcare and social policies are putting barriers in the way of their independence and undermining their role in contributing to vibrant, healthy communities and economies. And many of the gaps that have crystallized during the pandemic are the result of ageism.

For years, Federal Retirees has advocated for a senior’s strategy



## A BETTER WAY FORWARD FOR AGING IN ONTARIO

that ensures older adults remain independent and engaged, ageing in a place of their choosing with health and security.

An important way to ensure accountability for the implementation of an Ontario's seniors' strategy involves the creation of an independent senior's advocate who would monitor seniors' services, make recommendations, and work in the interests of older Ontarians on issues ranging from ageism to long-term care.

***Ontario needs an independent seniors advocate and a provincial senior's strategy that encourages age-positive wellbeing and age-friendly communities, with older adults involved in policy decisions that impact their wellbeing.***

### Access to health care

The Canada Health Act guarantees that access to health care services is a fundamental right for all Canadians. Even so, many older Ontarians are having trouble accessing a family doctor and face lengthy wait times for consultations with specialists, as well as for diagnostic and surgical procedures.

The Ontario Medical Association estimates the pandemic delayed 21 million patient care services, including one million are surgeries. Ontario's health ministry estimates a knee replacement can take as long as 30 months, while hip and cataract surgeries have wait times of up to 25 months. One million Ontarians are also without a family doctor. And just last fall, a funding dispute meant older Ontarians could not access OHIP-insured routine eye care.

Some of these numbers may be higher as residents have lost faith in the system and are not placing themselves on waiting lists – which means they may not be able to access the health care they need.

***Ontario needs funding to meet the needs of older adults, including vision care, health human resource planning, and the immediate need to address backlogged surgeries and other procedures.***

### THE QUESTIONS

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

1

Ontario's long-term care sector needs better standards and regulation, oversight, and accountability. How will your party fund long-term care, and ensure long-term care regulation and inspections are rigorous and enforced in this province?

2

How and when will your party act to ensure better, more available home care for Ontarians?

3

What new health care funding will your party make to address backlogs and delayed health care services and surgeries, enable better access to primary care providers, and ensure Ontario's health care system remains public and accessible?

4

What is your party's plan and timeline to develop, in collaboration with older adults and advocates, a provincial senior's strategy to support age-positive wellbeing in Ontario?

5

What is your party's plan and timeline to introduce an independent seniors advocate in Ontario?

