



A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR AGING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia will head to the polls by October 19. During this election, Federal Retirees is calling on the province's next government to address the needs of an aging population and create a healthier future for aging in British Columbia.

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.

Earlier this year, the Local News Data Hub at Toronto Metropolitan University reported on the 15 urban centres in Canada with the largest number of adults aged 65 and older. Six B.C. cities made the list. Parksville topped the list, with 46 per cent of its population aged 65 or older. Sidney was second on the list but surpassed Parksville when it came to the percentage of people aged 80 or over — 14 per cent.

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

This provincial election is our chance to do that.

KEY MESSAGES

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

- Ensure British Columbians' incomes keep up with cost-of-living increases.
- Enable aging in place by ensuring timely access to needed supports.
- Improve access to care through provision of funding and services.

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, including approximately 25,000 in British Columbia, 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 British Columbians' 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 British Columbians to make ends meet.

With record inflation in the last three years, older British Columbians 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.

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.

Access to affordable and appropriate housing is a well-known social determinant of health. 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.

In recent polling conducted by Angus Reid, 60 per cent of British Columbian's have said the increased cost-of-living is their top concern this election. In addition, 40 per cent said housing affordability is a top concern.

The Government of British Columbia's 2024 Consumer Price Index



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report, shows that from July 2023 to July 2024 British Columbia had the second highest rate of inflation in Canada. Over this period the cost of shelter increased 6.5 per cent. with the cost to rent increasing by 8.5 per cent and the cost of home ownership increasing 6 per cent. Statistics Canada reported 49 per cent of older renters in Canada are spending more than they can afford on housing. The consequences of eviction are particularly stark for older adults who have medical and accessibility needs.

The 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Seniors Advocate notes a risk of homelessness among older adults due to increased cost of living and scarcity of affordable market rental units and subsidized housing. As noted in the report, the waitlist for subsidized housing for seniors in B.C. has increased 59 per cent over the last five years, with 17 per cent of applicants waiting more than 5 years.

The City of Vancouver's [homeless count for 2023](#), reports 21 per cent of the Vancouver's homeless population are seniors or individuals aged 55 and above. And almost half of them first experienced homelessness when they were already a senior. It is worth noting this is considered an undercount.

Earlier this year, the City of Vancouver approved a Seniors Housing Strategy, which aims to ensure elders and older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community. This is a good first step, but more needs to be done in Vancouver and across the province.

The next government must ensure British Columbian'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 ageing in place

British Columbia's next government must support older adults to age

with dignity, in the place of their choosing.

Most older adults want to age in place, at home, in their communities. 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.

British Columbia's next government must improve access to care, by ensuring funding and services to enable aging in place – including access to publicly-funded home care, access to local care providers, support for caregivers and improved wait times for care.

The 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Seniors Advocate notes a lack of appropriate housing for people living with dementia or cognitive impairment, a lack of tenancy protections for people in independent living and assisted living, and a pattern of insufficient income to meet increasing rent and utility costs

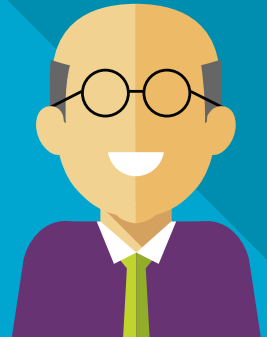
Older adults in British Columbia must have timely access to local support services available to help older adults age in place in their homes and communities.

British Columbia's next government must invest in tools and programs to enable older adults to age in place and ensure the work of caregivers is recognized and supported.

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. Access to primary care is a challenge for many British Columbians.





A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR AGING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

In addition, BC hospitals faced unprecedented challenges in 2023, including staffing issues, overcrowding, and increased wait times.

Nearly one million British Columbians do not have a family doctor. And in a survey conducted by the BC College of Family Physicians, 40 per cent of British Columbians reported they are concerned they will lose the family doctor they currently have, due to retirement or closure of practice. In addition, nearly one million people in B.C. are on wait lists to receive care from a specialist, often with increasing pain while their conditions worsen.

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

The 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Seniors Advocate notes concerns around admission to long-term care and wait-list processes; barriers to home health and home support services including limited hours of care and client rates; decreased access to primary care, family physicians or nurse practitioners; concerns around acute care admissions, such as over-crowding, and understanding hospital discharge planning; increased expectation of individuals to pay for private long-term care while waiting for subsidized long-term care; and timely access to long-term care and assisted living.

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

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 British Columbia.

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 Seniors are a fast-growing demographic in British Columbia. What is your party's strategy to meet seniors' needs?
 - 2 How will you make life more affordable for British Columbians?
 - 3 How will your 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 British Columbia?
 - 4 How will your party ensure British Columbians have access to the affordable housing they need?
 - 5 How will your party support older adults in British Columbia 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 British Columbians 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 British Columbians?
- And be sure to follow-up and ask candidates and their campaigners when they'll follow through on their promises to older adults in British Columbia.