

# Health care and older adult care

## 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, and nearly 7,500 members in New Brunswick, we have a proud 56-year history of advocacy on behalf of our members and retirees.

## KEY MESSAGE

New Brunswick needs a health care system that aligns with the current needs of New Brunswickers and that can adapt to serve the changing needs of an aging population.

## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

For years, New Brunswick's health care system has been dealing with various issues, including a shortage of health care professionals, difficulties in delivering health care equitably across the province, and challenges in providing the health and social services that New Brunswickers require as they age.

We know that older adults rely on the health care system. As one of the provinces with the oldest population, fundamental changes must be made to the health and social services available to older adults as well as to the ways in which these services are delivered.

Gaps in health care and social policies create barriers to older adults' independence and the essential role they play in vibrant, healthy communities and economies.

Across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long-standing issues with health and older adult care, resulting in devastating circumstances in long-term care homes and similar facilities, and for older adults and vulnerable populations generally.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be additional health care concerns to address, including procedure and surgery backlogs, and the mental health impacts resulting from the pandemic and the measures put in place to stop the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 provides an opportunity to transform our health care system and rethink older adult for the better.

## SOME CHALLENGES

### Accessing quality health care when and where you need it

- Standards of care are inconsistent across the province. Many New Brunswickers do not have access to a primary health provider and with approximately seven geriatricians serving the entire province, New Brunswick, like most of Canada, is unprepared to meet the current and growing demands for geriatric expertise.
- Ensuring an integrated continuum of care (coordinated and continuous care across health care services) close to home is also vital so that New Brunswickers can access the care they need in comfortable and familiar settings in their communities.
- The need for new health and social services providers, like community care workers and personal support workers, is growing. As has been highlighted by COVID-19, adequate staffing levels, better training and education, and safe working conditions are needed to improve care.



### CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

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**Staying healthy and active for as long as possible**

- Canadians are living longer, and our health care system is not keeping up with shifting demographics.
- The right care, at the right time, in the right place, at all stages of aging, requires a clear plan and stable funding. We need a quality, accessible health care system that focuses on preventative care and addressing the social determinants of health, so that New Brunswickers can be healthy at every age and especially as they get older.
- A focus on preventative care and addressing the social determinants of health will free up resources in hospitals, help address hallway medicine, reduce health care spending, and divert funds to areas of the system where they will go farther and lead to better outcomes, like home and community care.

**Maintaining independence, productivity and engagement in the community and economy**

- Social isolation, elder abuse, ageism and a lack of age-friendly strategies can deteriorate quality of life, and lead to poor health outcomes, higher social costs and loss of vital economic and social contributions of older populations.

**A lack of support for Informal Caregivers**

- More than 8 million Canadians provide care to a family member or friend, saving the health care, social, and community care systems between \$24 billion and \$31 billion annually. This comes at a cost to their careers, personal finances, and their physical health, mental health and emotional well-being.

**TALKING TO CANDIDATES**

During the New Brunswick provincial election, you may have an opportunity to speak to candidates in your electoral district – from a safe physical distance, of course! This might include calls from candidates, radio call-in shows, and telephone or web-based town halls offered by campaigns.

If you have a chance, consider asking your local candidates about the following issues.

1. Over the past couple of years, several changes to our health care system have been proposed. Some have been implemented, some have been walked back, and some are on hold because of COVID-19. What is your party's plan for health care reform and what priority areas will you and your party be focusing on if elected?
2. Older adults have different needs at different stages of life. Most people want to age at home and in their communities but require support to do so. The long-standing issues with long-term care that have been highlighted by COVID-19 have only intensified peoples' desire to age at home. How will your party help us ensure comprehensive, timely, quality long-term care and home and community care?
3. Caregiving can be a rewarding experience but can also involve career setbacks, financial hardship, stress, and physical and mental health challenges for caregivers. How will your party support unpaid caregivers who play a vital role in New Brunswick's health care and social systems?
4. Advocates from across the country have been calling for a comprehensive, focused National Seniors Strategy to address older adult care, the social determinants of health (housing, transport, income security), caregiver support, and the development of age-friendly communities. To implement a National Seniors Strategy, coordination and collaboration from provinces, including New Brunswick, is needed. Does your party support a National Seniors Strategy and will it encourage the federal government to lead its implementation?

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