

# SENIORS' ISSUES FOR THE 2025 FEDERAL ELECTION

Endorsed by

To: ACER-CART members, affiliated members and friends

Each year, ACER-CART identifies key issues of importance to retired educators and Canadian seniors. We are a national, bilingual, non-partisan Association that speaks to government and all political parties in support of our membership. We are committed to promoting a vibrant, healthy and dignified lifestyle for our members.

At our Annual General Meeting in June 2024, ACER-CART approved the following priorities that we wish to communicate to the politicians in the upcoming federal election:

- Advocate for a National Seniors' Strategy
- Support an expanded, comprehensive, single-payer National Pharmacare Plan
- Ensure seniors have a guaranteed and sufficient retirement income
- Prioritize care in seniors' own homes with community supports to Age in Place
- Oppose the Privatization of Health Services in Canada

The ACER-CART Political Advocacy Committee developed this resource to help members prepare for the upcoming election. Each issue has facts and questions to help politicians better understand the issues.

Use this information as you visit the nominated candidates of each political party in your riding to focus their attention on the critical issues facing seniors now and in the future. You may select only one or two issues important to you to talk about with the candidates.

This information can also be useful to determine where you stand on each issue, why these issues are important to you as you talk to your friends and family, and hopefully to guide you in your decision on how you will vote.

More importantly – **VOTE !**

Bill Berryman

President, ACER-CART

How to use the information in this brochure:

- Become familiar with the issues as described.
- Evaluate the platform of the political parties to see which party most closely responds to your issues.
- Ask some of the provided questions when you can attend an all- candidates forum/townhall.
- Ask some of the provided questions when you receive a phone call from campaign workers asking for your support.
- Share this information when talking to your friends and family in pre-election discussions.

## **AGEING IN PLACE**

**Key Message: Canadian seniors want to age with dignity at home or in their home communities for as long as possible.**

Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. They are better served when they have autonomy and control of their daily living as they remain in a comfortable, familiar environment.

### **Aspects to consider:**

- Access to medical care, in a timely manner, in their own community.
- Adequate home care supports to enable them to live safely and as independently as possible.
- Social and Emotional support will allow seniors to lead vibrant, fulfilling lives with dignity.
- Economic stability with a guaranteed income.
- Transportation, a necessity especially in rural areas for all aspects of independent living (grocery store, doctor appointments, and social activities).

### **Benefits to the system:**

- Adequate access to medical care reduces the rate of hospitalization.
- Those living at home are not filling LTC beds unnecessarily.
- Engaged persons living in familiar surroundings are less likely to develop mental health issues.
- Seniors with an adequate income can contribute socially and financially to their communities.
- Seniors with ready access to transportation can live more independently for longer.
- Research has shown that there is a reduced risk of chronic disease and loneliness when seniors live in walkable communities and participate in physical activities.

### **Questions for candidates:**

1. If elected, how will you advocate for Seniors to be able to access appropriate medical care in a timely fashion?
2. If elected, how will you provide support to enable seniors to live in their own homes or in their communities for as long as they wish?
3. Can you tell me what you would be willing to do to make it possible for seniors living outside of urban areas to become fully integrated into their communities?

## NATIONAL PHARMACARE PLAN

### **Key Message: Implement Bill C-68: An Act Respecting Pharmacare and provide greater coverage of medications**

For the past ten years ACER-CART has been advocating for a universal, comprehensive, single-payer national Pharmacare program.

On October 10, 2024, our hopes came to fruition with Bill C-68 receiving Royal Assent <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-64/royal-assent>. to become the law of the land that is now in force.

Although members are very pleased with this development, ACER-CART believes that this is the first phase of the program, and we are now advocating that certain antibiotics, cholesterol medicines, blood pressure and psychological medications be added to the national formulary as the second phase.

### **Aspects to consider:**

ACER-CART requests the following statements under Bill C-68 be implemented immediately.

- Provide a universal, single-payer, first-dollar access to a range of contraception and diabetes medications as the first phase of the program.
- Prepare a list of essential medications and related products under a national formulary and develop a bulk purchasing strategy.
- Develop a National Strategy for rare diseases and improve the accessibility and affordability for catastrophic drugs.
- Establish a committee of experts to provide recommendations respecting options for the operation and financing of a national, universal, single payer pharmacare program.
- Establish a new Canadian Drug Agency to help improve appropriate prescribing and use of medications, reduce drug system duplication and increase pan-Canadian collection and access to drug and treatment data.

### **Questions for our politicians:**

1. If elected, what will your government do to work collectively with other levels of government to overcome jurisdictional issues and implement a truly national pharmacare program?
2. If elected, how and when will your government ensure a comprehensive, evidence-based formulary is established in order for Canadians to access the medications that they need to maintain and improve their health?
3. If elected, how and when will your government implement the second phase of the program?

## OPPOSITION TO PRIVATIZATION OF MEDICAL SERVICES

**Key Message: Research evidence suggests parallel private-pay health services could exacerbate inequities in accessing care, draw resources away from the public system and lead to higher overall spending in healthcare.**

Medicare is based on the five principles in the Canada Health Act: public administration, universal access, comprehensive coverage, accessibility without extra charges or discrimination, and portability across the provinces and territories.

### What is the Issue?

A report by the Ontario Health Coalition found that there were over 150 private clinics in five Canadian provinces. The report also provided evidence that up to 100 of these clinics may be selling services in violation of the Canada Health Act. These clinics provide the following:

- Specialty services (e.g., joint replacement, eye surgery, hernia repair)
- Diagnostic imaging (e.g., x-rays, MRI's, CT scans, ultrasound)
- Primary care and boutique health services by nurse practitioners and pharmacists

### Advantages of Public Medical Services

In 2023 the Canadian Medical Association, as part of their "It's Time to Talk" campaign, hired the Angus Reid Institute to conduct a survey of Canadian citizens on public versus private healthcare. A resounding 72% of participants indicated a preference for public healthcare versus 28% which supported private healthcare.

Five reasons why Canadians need to encourage governments to support public health services:

- **Universal Coverage** ensuring every Canadian has access to essential medical services.
- **Access** based on need, rather than ability to pay.
- **Cost-Effectiveness** as the public healthcare system achieves significant economics of scale through bulk purchasing of medications and centralized planning.
- **Preventive Care** by investing in measures to prevent illness and promote good health.
- **Emergency Services** in public hospitals are well-equipped to handle a broad spectrum of emergencies providing critical care services that are accessible around the clock.

ACER-CART is requesting the newly elected government, through the Minister of Health, to vigorously enforce the principles and conditions of the Canada Health Act, and beef-up investigations and monitoring for prohibited practices such as user-fees and extra billing.

### **Questions:**

1. How would your party ensure that all Canadians have universal accessibility to healthcare services without extra charges?
2. Would your government pass new regulations under the Canada Health Act that would provide investigatory powers to Health Canada in cases of non-compliance of the Act?
3. How would your government ensure that physicians, private clinics and corporations are not able to participate and receive funding under the Canada Health Act?

## **ENSURING RETIREMENT INCOME FOR CANADIANS**

**Key Message: Canadians deserve to age with dignity and security, having a guaranteed and sufficient source of income.**

A defined benefit pension plan is a pension that we traditionally envision – employers and employees contribute to a pension fund which is pooled and invested so that retirees are paid a guaranteed amount for the rest of their lives, based on a formula that considers salary and years of employment. Defined benefit pensions have proven to make retirement income secure and efficient with up to 80 per cent of pension dollars coming from investment returns. This enables retirees to pay taxes and contribute to local, provincial, territorial, and national economies.

The number of defined benefit plans continues to decline, replaced by defined contribution and target benefit plans, which transfer risk to their retirees and place them in danger of an uncertain future. Properly managed defined benefit plans have proven to make retirement secure.

Specific changes are needed to ensure that pensions are protected during insolvencies. Currently, employees and retirees are left with nothing when their employers go bankrupt with unfunded pension liabilities.

### **Aspects to Consider:**

- Protecting Accrued Pension Benefits means that no employer is allowed to change compensation earned by retirees once they have retired. Employees can be confident that their future is secure and that their contractually promised pension — their deferred wages — will be guaranteed.
- Protecting Employees and Retirees in corporate insolvencies will ensure they have a secure retirement and not have to rely on tax-payer funded benefits.
- Strengthening Defined Benefit Plans will deliver the same retirement income at a much lower cost than defined contribution or target benefit plans and ensure a secure future for retirees.

### **Questions for our politicians:**

1. What is your party's plan for retirement income security for current and future seniors?
2. How will you protect all accrued pension benefits?
3. How will you support and encourage defined benefit pension plans?
4. How will you ensure that the pensions of employees and retirees are protected if their employer declares bankruptcy?

## VOTER INFORMATION

Voter information can be found on the Elections Canada website **elections.ca** under the tab **Voters - Everything a Voter should Know**.

1. Go to Voter Information Service if you have moved since the last election. You may be in a different riding.
2. Go to Voter Registration Services to check your registration, update your address, or register for the first time. Those registered should receive a voter information card with reminders when, where, and the ways to vote.
3. Options for Voter Identification required for Federal Elections:
  - Driver's license or government issued card with your photo, name and current address.
  - Two pieces of ID, both with name and one with current address.
  - If you have no ID, you can still vote if you declare your identify and address in writing and have someone who knows you and who is assigned to your polling station vouch for you. The Voucher must be able to prove their identity and address and can only vouch for one person (except in a long-term care facilities).
4. Ways to Vote:
  - At your assigned polling station on Election Day.
  - At your assigned Advance Poll held on the 10th, 9th, 8th and 7th days before election day.
  - At any Elections Canada office across the country (until the Tuesday before election day)
  - By Special Ballot which must be applied for in advance. Elections Canada must receive your special ballot prior to Election Day.
  - At a Mobile Poll if you are in hospital or facilities that provide long-term care.

For Further information