

SENIORS – MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT!

Senior citizens are the largest and fastest-growing population in Ontario, and seniors vote!

The number of senior citizens in Ontario is growing rapidly. In 2016, there were 2.3 million seniors age 65+; by 2041 the projected number will be 4.6 million.¹ Elections Canada reports that across Canada, seniors get out and cast their ballots at a higher rate than any other age group. As they continue to make up an increasing proportion of the population, senior voters will make up an increasing proportion of the total votes cast. Seniors can make a large difference in election results!

In 2018, seniors have the opportunity to directly influence policy!

Thursday, June 7th, 2018 is the provincial general election.

Voting in the Ontario general election is an expression of civic and social responsibility. Even if you aren't eligible to cast a ballot (for example, because you may not currently be a Canadian citizen), you still have many opportunities to participate in the election process. You can attend all-candidates meetings, ask important questions, talk with candidates who come to your door, and communicate your concerns to the competing political parties.

More seniors will lead to more demand for medical care services.

Without appropriate alternatives, the sharp growth in the number of seniors across Ontario means increasing demand for medical care and services – a strain on our health care system.² Emergency rooms see long lines, waits for long-term care home and rehabilitation beds are daunting, and demand for in-home care is high.

Seniors want to live independently and in their homes as long as possible.

Academics, policy makers, and seniors' organizations have asked seniors how they want to live as they grow old. Overwhelmingly, seniors say they want to live independently in their homes and communities as long as possible. To do so, they need support and services that facilitate ageing in place – services such as personal care, homemaking, transportation, meals, and adult day services. These services are called community support services. They are delivered by personal support workers and volunteers and are partially funded by the Ontario government.

Research shows that community support services not only meet immediate needs, but can forestall future ones. They reduce the need for hospitalization and institutionalization.³ In jurisdictions around the world, supportive services form the basis for innovative models that can support even the most frail of seniors. Examples include PACE in California, SIPA and PRISMA in Quebec, and CHOICE in Alberta.⁴ Community support services provide the care, safety, and security seniors need. When these needs aren't met, seniors end up in emergency rooms, hospitals, and long-term care homes.

Care Watch listens to seniors.

Care Watch is a senior citizen-led organization that advocates for high quality, affordable, and equitable home care and community supports for Ontario's elderly. We monitor provincial policy and give decision-makers analysis and feedback - from the consumer's perspective - on how to achieve a home care system that supports dignified ageing.

Care Watch believes every senior in every community in Ontario is entitled to equitable access to a comprehensive array – or basket – of supportive home services. This basket should include:



Personal care: Assistance with bathing and other activities of daily living



Homemaking: Assistance with shopping, laundry, cleaning, maintenance, and snow removal



Transportation: Accessible and affordable transportation to health appointments and to social and recreational activities



Meal services: Access to nutritious and affordable food, via Meals on Wheels® (delivery of fresh or frozen meals), communal meals, and wheels to meals



Adult day services, such as dementia daycare and programs for the frail/socially isolated



Caregiver support: Education, information, and respite care in the home and community



Care coordination: Assessing needs, developing care plans, coordinating services, monitoring those services, and communicating with the client, family, and providers

Care Watch wants Ontario to commit to giving each senior in the province access to this basket of services.

Access to community support services currently varies in the province. Care Watch strongly advocates that the basket of services become the standard and that it be made available everywhere across the province. Every senior in every community should have access to the same array of services. Of course, not all seniors have the same needs or will need all these services. Each prospective client will be assessed for the type(s) and amount of services needed, but wherever the client lives, every service in the basket will be available. When all seniors have access to a comprehensive range of supportive home care services, everyone benefits. Ontario's seniors have a safe, supported, and protected environment, and our already stressed health care system makes better and more efficient use of its resources.

Political parties and candidates need your support → Make them earn your vote!

We need to know exactly what candidates from all parties will pledge to do for seniors. Ask them:

- **What will you do to make it possible for senior citizens to age safely and confidently in their own homes?**
- **Do you endorse the creation of a required standard basket of services that will be available to all seniors across Ontario? If so, what specifically will you do to make it happen?**

NOTES

¹ Ontario Ministry of Finance. Ontario Population Projections Update, 2016-2041.

² Ontario's Auditor General estimates that at least 15% of hospital patients could have been served by a family doctor in a non-hospital setting, in a long-term care centre, or through home care.

³ The Balance of Care. CRNCC In Focus. Paul Williams, Kerry Kuluski, Jillian Watkins, and Robin Montgomery, University of Toronto; Janet Lum and Alvin Ying, Ryerson University; in collaboration with David Challis Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU), University of Manchester. November 2009.

⁴ Community Support Services. CRNCC In Focus. Fern Teplitsky (Health Planner/Consultant), A. Paul Williams (University of Toronto), Raisa Deber (University of Toronto), Janet Lum (Ryerson University), and David Salib (Ryerson University). March 2006.