

April 2, 2018

Senior citizens are the largest and fastest-growing population in Ontario. 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, their votes will make up an increasing proportion of the total votes cast. Seniors can make a large difference in election results.

2018 – A Double Election Year

In 2018, Ontarians will have the opportunity to participate in two elections: A **provincial election**, on Thursday, June 7, 2018, and municipal elections scheduled for Monday, October 22, 2018 (more about this election later).

This means Ontario's senior citizens will have two opportunities to directly influence how our province and our municipalities are governed and to advocate for policies and programmes in the interest of seniors. These same policies that support seniors also benefit other groups, such as children and people experiencing functional disabilities.

Voting is a concrete expression of citizenship and civic responsibility, but not the only one. It's also important to speak up, ask questions, and add your voice and thoughts to public debates.

Provincial General Election – Thursday, June 7, 2018

To vote in the Ontario general election, you must be at least 18 years of age, a Canadian citizen, and a resident of Ontario. However, even those who aren't eligible to cast a ballot (for example, because they aren't currently Canadian citizens) can still provide input to the election. They can attend all-candidates meetings and ask important questions, talk with candidates who come to their door, and communicate their concerns to the competing political parties.

We all need to know and understand exactly what parties and candidates are prepared to do to improve services for Ontario's seniors. They need our votes; they should have to earn them.

What do seniors want?

Academics, policy makers, and seniors' organizations have asked seniors how they want to live. Overwhelmingly, seniors say they want to live independently in their homes and communities as long as possible. They are entitled to the supports that will let them do so.

Care Watch – a senior-led organization – has listened to seniors. We strongly believe that:

- Ontario's senior citizens are entitled to the services that will let them age safely in their own homes.

- Not-for-profit community organizations are the best community support service providers. The savings they generate through efficiencies are reinvested in services and not treated as profits. We therefore favour public administration and not-for-profit service delivery.
- Personal support workers in the community need to be paid as much as those who work in institutions.
- Community support services need funding they can count on.

1. Properly resourced home care and community support services.

Ontario’s senior citizens are entitled to the services that will let them age safely in their own homes. Politicians want to reduce hospital wait times; they can do this by providing the home care and community support services that keep people out of emergency departments and hospitals. When the only people in hospitals are those who really need hospital care, wait times and hospital costs decrease.

Funding to community support services has not kept pace with the increased number of clients, the increasing needs of those clients, and the impact of shorter hospital stays. Community support services need funding they can count on. They should receive:

- A 3% annual increase to bring their funding into line with funding to institutions.
- An additional 2% annual increase so these services can grow province-wide.
- Annual adjustments for inflation.

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

CANDIDATES WANT YOUR VOTE. ASK THEM:

- **Do you support providing services to help senior citizens age safely and confidently in their own homes?**
- **What specifically will you do to support home care and community support services for seniors?**
- **What specifically will you do to hold all providers of home care and community support services accountable for how they use public funding?**

2. Equitable access to home care and community support services

The number of senior citizens in Ontario is growing, and growing rapidly. In 2016, there were 2.3 million seniors age 65+; by 2041 the projected number will be 4.6 million.ⁱ The proportion of seniors in Ontario’s total population is also rising. In 1996, they made up 12.4%; by 2016, the proportion had risen to 16.7%; and by 2041, they are projected to make up 25% of the total.^{ii,iii}

This sharp growth strains health care delivery. Demand for in-home care is high, the number of hospital beds is insufficient, emergency rooms see long lines, and waits for long-term care home and rehabilitation beds are daunting.

In addition, access to home care and community support services can depend as much on where you live as on what you need.

What is Care Watch's solution?

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.

We offer the following advice and solutions.

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, home and lawn 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 day programs for the frail/socially isolated elderly



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



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

These services not only meet immediate needs, but can forestall future ones and reduce the need for hospitalization and institutionalization.^{iv} 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.^v

The Ontario government partially funds these supportive home care services. Health care workers (for example, personal support workers) and/or volunteers deliver them. But not all Ontario seniors have access to the same services. What is offered varies according to the community and its location in the province.

Care Watch strongly advocates that a basket of services be defined as a standard and then required across the province so that every senior in every community has access to the same services. Not all clients have the same needs. Each prospective client will be assessed for the type(s) and amount of services needed, but every service in the basket will be available.

The province needs to commit to requiring that this basket of services be available to each senior. Together these services work to provide the care, safety, and security that frail and even less frail seniors need. When seniors don't have the services they need, they end up in emergency rooms, hospitals, and long-term care homes – or worse.

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.

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

CANDIDATES WANT YOUR VOTE. 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 everywhere in Ontario?**
- **If so, what specifically will you do to make it happen?**

END NOTES

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

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

ⁱⁱⁱ Statistics Canada, 2017. *Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001., Ontario.

^{iv} *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.

^v 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.