

**CANADA GOES TO THE POLLS ON
OCTOBER 21, 2019**

Elections are key opportunities for our voices to be heard and our perspectives considered.

Care Watch encourages you to participate.



In 2019, senior citizens will have a chance to influence our national government's leadership. National policies, and especially the funding supporting them, are the frameworks for programming and services at the provincial/territorial and municipal levels. These policies directly and indirectly affect our daily lives, including our ability to age safely in our own homes and communities.

The election is your chance to make sure that the parties and candidates that want and need your vote will respond to the needs of seniors.

To influence, we need to understand.

To understand, we need to question.

Then we need to vote!



To vote in federal elections, individuals must be citizens of Canada. However, even non-citizens can participate and make important contributions. We can all:

- Inform candidates of policies and programmes that are in the interest of seniors (and often of other groups, such as children and vulnerable adults)
- Tell family, friends, and colleagues about our concerns and issues and then discuss options and solutions with them
- Encourage others to question, to become informed, and, where qualified, to vote
- Attend meetings and ask questions

To find out about where and how to vote, go to: <https://www.elections.ca/homeGE.aspx>. In the box on the right-hand of the screen – “My voter information” – you can find information on your federal riding by entering your postal code in the smaller box. Later, you can check with local community organizations about the schedule for meetings with candidates.

Care Watch Ontario advocates for a comprehensive and equitable system of home care and community support services to help older adults age safely in their own homes and communities and to keep them out of institutions. Policies and funding for health care, affordable housing, and a range of other services directly and indirectly affect home care and community support services.

Provinces and territories are responsible for delivering and programming health services. However, national policy frameworks provide a foundation and guidance for them to take needed action.

Care Watch has identified two new national policy frameworks – a **national seniors’ strategy** and a **national pharmacare strategy** - that will significantly contribute to the range and quality of home care and community support services in our communities. Even more importantly, they will significantly contribute to the quality of our lives as we age.

- **National Seniors’ Strategy:**

Organizations such as the National Institute on Aging, CARP, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Canadian Nurses Association have called for a national seniors’ strategy. The details of their proposals vary. The consensus, however, is that as we spend more and more on health and on social and community services, older Canadians, their families, and friends need a comprehensive and coordinated range of services that embody the principles of accessibility, equity, choice, value, and quality. The overarching theme of these proposals is promoting the health and well-being of Canadians as they age. Other themes include:

- Enhancing supportive chronic disease prevention and management
- Increasing system capacity to address frailty and vulnerability (such as dementia) and end of life/palliative care
- Integrating a continuum of care and increasing the accessibility and flexibility of services
- Improving retirement income security
- Increasing home care and community support services, including support for caregivers
- Establishing universal pharmacare

- **National Pharmacare:**

Drugs play an important role in health care and in maintaining quality of life for older Canadians. If used appropriately, they not only improve health but also relieve cost burdens elsewhere in the health system. Analysts estimate that universal pharmacare could save Canadians about \$11.4 billion annually. In the OECD, Canada is the second highest per capita spender on prescription drugs, but we don’t benefit from economies of scale because we fragment price negotiations with multi-national pharmaceutical companies.

As the need for prescription drugs increases, drug prices increase correspondingly. Countries that include universal drug coverage as a part of the formal health care system have better access to medicine, more affordable drugs, and more financial protection for the sick. A universal pharmacare scheme that embodies *Canada Health Act* principles will give Canadians affordable and accessible drugs and promote a sustainable health system.

Care Watch will be offering information and resources regarding these priority policies along with some background information. The *Canada Health Act* is a prime example of an important national policy framework, so we will offer a discussion of the *Canada Health Act’s* principles in the context of home care and community support services.

We will also suggest questions you may wish to ask candidates. Their answers can help you decide how to vote. Check our elections section at: <https://carewatchontario.com/>