

Promises, promises – the language of politicians and the stuff of elections. Each party promises to do more for us than the others or maybe just more than it did the last time it campaigned.

In 2021, Canada elected a minority Liberal government, just as it did in 2019. But is it déjà vu all over again? Let's look at some of the campaign promises and how they affect home and community care.



In addition to reminding us of what they have already done, in 2021, the Liberals pledge to:

- **Help older Canadians remain in their homes.** The Age Well at Home Initiative will explore ways to keep older adults at home, support community-based organizations, and build on current initiatives. A larger Home Accessibility Tax Credit will allow older adults to modify their homes.
- **Apply consistent care standards and make permanent changes to long-term care** with a *Safe Long-Term Care Act*. Such an act must be a collaboration with provinces and territories, which have jurisdiction over long-term care, so the road may not be smooth.
- **Continue work on national pharmacare**, a pledge carried over from 2019. The Liberals say they are “maintaining momentum,” but progress has been slow. Pharmacare benefits not only older adults, but also all Canadians. Much more work remains.

We are heartened by the recognition of people who provide care, people who were ignored in the Liberals' 2019 platform. COVID-19 showed us the sad state of the workforce, many of whom are personal support workers. Our prime minister says, “Better care for seniors starts with better conditions for our frontline care workers.” The Liberals have pledged to: 1) raise wages for personal support workers, including a guaranteed minimum wage of at least \$25 per hour; 2) train up to 50,000 new personal support workers throughout Canada; and 3) provide affordable ways for them to save for retirement.

We welcome these ideas. In particular, we need to know:

- **How many new positions will be created?** The funds for training new personal support workers “build on” previous federal and provincial investments, so we can't be sure.
- **How many new jobs will go to personal support workers in the community?** Will they earn as much as those in hospitals and long-term care homes? Will they have the same incentives? Already, community agencies find it hard to keep personal support workers. Improving jobs in hospitals and long-term care shouldn't come at a cost to the community.

There is also one large disappointment. We and others have called for a national seniors strategy – a framework for services for older Canadians. The Liberals ignored it in both the 2019 and 2021 platforms. The government is a minority, however. Continued pressure from other parties and from the public may give it the attention it needs.

What can you do?

- Don't be dazzled. Large numbers with dollar signs make our heads spin. If government announces money, look a little deeper. Is it as good as it sounds? Is it new funding or does it include what is already being spent?
- When you hear a promise about improving services, how will that work? If there are standards, who will enforce them?
- If improvements were promised before and didn't happen, what has changed?

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