

# The young and the resting

*Pete Aarssen - August 2021*

None of us wants to participate in a possible federal election ahead of schedule, yet it appears, almost certainly that we will! Afterall, it is legal for the governing party to do so and following a world-scale event with the consequences wrought from Covid 19 itself and those incurred by our country's response to it, having the various political parties clearly articulate their future policy positions is a very timely and healthy public dialogue for us to have! In fact, the policies that our federal government implements, demands a review of the larger planks of policy promises made by aspiring political leaders of great public interest and concern. That's why I am puzzled by the Liberal government's promotion of '\$10 a day childcare'; an agreement that was recently announced in partnership between the federal government and several provinces so far. This near election-like promise will require hundreds of millions of federal dollars be invested in each province. Those dollars will have to come from future public money, our tax dollars, not from a newfound treasure trove of federal funds or from those already held in reserve, nor from the cancelling of less important federal programs in order to fund this one. Wasn't the first and very sad consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic the tragic and large loss of life among elders living in long-term care facilities? Many of these facilities were inadequately prepared to combat the pandemic, and didn't we all learn of the heart-breaking living conditions many of our elders have had to endure within a very high number of long-term care facilities throughout Canada? You recall; under-staffed, under-paid staff providing residents with an inadequate level of actual care? Weren't the federal government's promises made then (a mere 16 months ago) to respond swiftly to this newly discovered injustice, to fix what went wrong so that the needs of our elders will never be overlooked again? Now I'm not opposed to improving the availability and cost-effectiveness of child-care services, I'm simply trying to direct the lens of our public discussion towards discovering the needed hierarchy to our many social concerns, to what is most important for government to respond to first. Children, for sure infants, enjoy society's affection or at least young people and their needs have the general attitudinal appreciation of society. On the other hand, society seems to ignore old people and their pressing needs, something that is referred to as gerontophobia: the fear and loathing of the old and of growing old. We have laws restricting us from discrimination against anyone based on race, religion, gender and sexual orientation yet ageism is still an accepted practice. Society likes and longs for old things: old furniture, old cars, aged wines and whiskies but not old people; do any of us plan on getting old one day? Why do the actions demanded by society continue to convey affection for the needs of children, children's charities, children's hospitals and now \$10 a day care and indifference, even neglect for the needs of the aged? While today's seniors are the ones who worked the longest and voted steadily to ensure a very generous social safety net be provided each member of society, they are remarkably and ironically being excluded from participating in the fruits of their efforts. So, if we had to choose a program that shows us to be a caring and responsible society, is it \$10 a day care, or the improved care of those who built the country that our children will one day inherit?