

# Elder concerns in the next Federal election

*Pete Aarssen - September 2020*

With Parliament being recently prorogued, a term that describes the ending of a session of Parliament, and in a minority government an action that often triggers an election, I want to offer some advice. Elders and their needs matter!

To emphasize my point, I could reference the huge scale of the electorate represented by elders; or the degree to which the elder cohort contributes financially to our now extremely vulnerable economy or sadly, I could represent the lessons learned due to the devastating effects of Covid 19 in many long-term care homes across Canada; the reprioritization of the care provided the aged. Instead, let's examine what elders say are their top, non-pandemic-related concerns, concerns which often align with those of other age groups and that continue to persist.

First, Healthcare. It's a fact that as we get older, we need more healthcare. Elders require a more agile health care system where screenings for their diseases and natural aging conditions can be caught in their beginning stages, while something can be done about them!

Another is the age-related consequences of diseases like Alzheimer's, dementia, cataracts, macular degeneration, and osteoporosis. All of these health issues can seriously threaten a person's independence and quality of life. Health issues progress with age; we need to learn and develop ways for elders to better cope with these demands before they become advanced.

The physical consequences of aging, in a society with an unprecedented number of aged among us, requires government to better prepare our communities and all of us to better prepare our homes for the fact that we cannot move as quickly as we used to nor see as well as we did! Nutrition and exercise are all the more important as we age.

As the demands of Covid have demonstrated, external assistance to get everyday items can be most helpful! Elders will need increased assistance getting things like their groceries, their medications and a growing list of items that they used to leave home for! And for aging in place, elders need an increased number of service providers ie. house cleaning, lawn care and home maintainers. Everything about caring for a home naturally gets more difficult as we get older and desire to live independently..

Money! The rising cost of living while often living on a fixed income poses increased challenges for elders to maximize their limited for savings and for governments to provide sufficient social services and benefits. We may not be able to afford the same comforts of life that we used to.

The detrimental effects of continued social isolation. Getting older means that one's friends are aging, as well. Elders often experience the loss of some of their friends. Spending time with their remaining friends and family members becomes more important. Therefore, all the services that help elders maintain socialization will be more prominent.

Elder fraud. Sadly, there is an increase in the number of unscrupulous people preying on seniors, trying to sell unnecessary goods or services to those they see as vulnerable. Elders really need someone to trust, to share their financial decisions with and for their precious savings to be better protected, institutionally speaking.

Elder abuse or neglect. I won't belabour this point. Recent experience has shown that some long-term care facilities have struggled with under-staffing which can lead to some forms of abuse or neglect and as a society, we have demanded this be rectified! An investment of time spent on this problem and the formulation of more effective policy options is most welcome. Sadly, these issues can and do occur in family life as well. Without abundant and caring family members, elders struggle to find and experience care-giving from people whom they can trust.

Elder transportation services. The cost to own a vehicle, the care and maintenance of it and the ability to even drive it effectively, all combine to make increased public transportation for elders a most needed service. We don't all live in the city so this challenge is a profound one.

Lastly, as so many of our daily needs and services seem to be more and more supported technologically, elders will need help adjusting to these changes. It could be the largest social hurdle facing elders as they age.



