

ELECTION WATCH

Update on the Federal Campaigns and Promises

The federal election campaign is well-underway, and the political parties are making daily announcements and pledges. As your national advocacy voice, the Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA) is monitoring the development of the different party platforms and tracking the commitments to home and community care.

ELECTION ASKS

Earlier this year, we have reached out to our CHCA members to identify issues important to them. Top priorities included:

⦿ Targeted funding for home and community care

CURRENT STATUS In 2017, the Federal Liberal government announced an investment of \$6 billion over 10 years to provinces and territories. As of 2019, only \$689.4 million has been transferred to the jurisdictions or 11% in 2 years. (The Fiscal Monitor, A publication of the Department of Finance, 2019)

ELECTION ASK Commitment to targeted home care funding and acceleration of the transfer payments to the jurisdictions over the next 4 years to reflect 60% of the \$6 billion (approx. \$1 billion/year).

⦿ Need for better palliative care

CURRENT STATUS In late 2017, the Framework on Palliative Care in Canada Act was passed by Parliament with all-party support. The final framework was tabled in Parliament in December 2018. The Action Plan, introduced in August 2019, laid out Health Canada's five-year plan to improve quality of life for people living with life-limiting illness, families and caregivers, as well as enhancing access, quality of care and health care system performance.

ELECTION ASK Support the implementation of the Action Plan on Palliative Care to improve the quality of life for people living with life-limiting illness through a four-year investment of \$10 million/year.

⦿ Increased availability of Health Human Resources for home and community care

CURRENT STATUS While mentorship and training programs are available for a wide range of intermediate skilled individuals, they are not specifically focused on the necessary skills and resources for home and community care. Home care workers need and want opportunities to develop competencies to meet increasingly complex patient needs. There is a need for immigration programs, specialty training, continuing education, and supportive programs for unregulated providers.

ELECTION ASK Establish a priority program within Employment and Social Development Canada to encourage and incent individuals to choose careers as unregulated home care workers by expanding the federal training grants program (skills and language proficiency) and streamlining the immigration application and process.

⦿ Financial supports for caregivers

CURRENT STATUS In 2017, the federal government restructured and expanded the caregiver benefits available through employment insurance—financial assistance of up to 55% of your earnings, to a maximum of \$562 a week—to help caregivers take time away from work to provide care or support to a critically ill or injured person or someone needing end-of-life care.

ELECTION ASK Make the caregiver benefit refundable in order to support low income caregivers.

POLITICAL PARTY MESSAGES

Health Care affordability and concerns is the number one priority for undecided voters.

The three major political parties have all acknowledged the integral role health care plays in our country and its importance to the Canadian voter of all ages. Here's what they have committed to...

- **CONSERVATIVE PARTY** - expressed their desire to increase the Canada Health Transfer to provinces and territories, expand the disability credit and invest \$1.5 billion on new medical imaging equipment to help alleviate wait times across the country.
- **LIBERAL PARTY** - assured Canadians their desire to continue investment and improve access to home care and palliative care. The Liberal Party also want to set standards for mental health services and give all Canadians access to primary care. Additionally, there is a promise of \$6 billion over four years towards pharmacare.
- **NEW DEMOCRAT PARTY** - reinforced that families need access to quality home care and long-term care no matter where they live. The NDP have also expressed their plans to roll out universal pharmacare beginning in 2020 with a \$10 billion/year investment. They also want to regulate natural health products and develop a roadmap that includes dental care in the Canada Health Act.

During this election period, the CHCA believes that the government must continue to support the health care system to alleviate the gaps in the current system, and thereby achieve an accessible and equitable path for home care. We look to the federal government to impact the health labour markets across the country. The demand for home care is outpacing the supply of Health Human Resources. Targeted programs to alleviate the shortage of intermediately skilled home care workers like "The Caregiver Pilot Program-Caring for People with High Medical Needs", should scale and spread across the country. Enhanced training grants, English/French language classes and improved immigration programs, would help to encourage foreign workers to choose careers as home care support workers.

As your national advocacy voice, the CHCA will promote home and community care in the election discourse and monitor the party promises. We will continue to provide you with updates on the party messaging and opportunities to influence the federal discussions.