

2019 Provincial Election: Seniors' Issues Primer

Transportation, supports that enable seniors to remain in the community, and social isolation significantly influence quality of life for Edmonton seniors. Provincial government policies and funding can have a considerable impact on how these issues are addressed.

This document can help you prepare to ask questions of candidates in the upcoming provincial election.

Issue	Transportation
Background	<p>For seniors who no longer drive, access to transportation services that allow them to maintain their independence and connection to the community is vital to their quality of life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public transit, including DATS, may not be an appropriate option for seniors in some cases.• Privately-operated transportation may not be an affordable option.• Non-profit organizations provide safe and reliable door through door transportation, but no public funding is available and the demand for these services is high.
Solutions	<p>Solutions that the provincial government can implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand the Alberta Seniors Benefit Special Needs Program for seniors using privately-operated and non-profit assisted transportation services.• Create a sustainable funding source for assisted transportation service providers.• Work with private and non-profit service providers to create a coordinated approach to seniors assisted transportation.
Question to ask candidates	<p>If elected, what will you do to ensure seniors can access safe, reliable, and affordable transportation?</p>

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Issue	Supports for seniors to remain in the community
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The shift in aging demographics and seniors' preference to remain living in their home as long as possible, have resulted in increased demands for non-medical supports (nutrition, socialization, transportation, home supports, assistance in accessing appropriate services, etc.).• These supports are proven to lead to improved health and social outcomes for seniors.• Community-based organizations (mostly non-profits) are an affordable source of many non-medical social supports.• Community-based organizations cannot meet the current demand for supports to age in community. These organizations require more resources.
Solutions	<p>Solutions that the provincial government can implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the investment to community-based organizations to deliver non-medical supports. Provision of these services can reduce the pressure on the health system and contribute to a senior's ability to function in their home and remain independent.• Support collaboration between community-based organizations and the health system to improve health and social outcomes for the growing seniors' demographic.
Question to ask candidates	If elected, what will you do to support increased investment in community-based supports for seniors?



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Issue	Social Isolation
Background	<p>An increasing number of seniors are experiencing, or are at risk of, social isolation (low quantity and quality of contact with others). This has a devastating impact on health, comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day and worse than obesity according to health experts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socially isolated persons lack social contacts, social roles, and mutually rewarding relationships.• Life transitions, health challenges, and smaller social networks put seniors especially at risk.• Being a newcomer immigrant and refugee senior, living on low income, and caregiving are risk factors.• Isolated seniors are at increased risk of dementia, depression, and anxiety.• If left unaddressed, isolation can result in vulnerability and a need for medical intervention.• Community-based organizations help to ensure that seniors' basic needs are being met so that they are better able to engage socially.
Solutions	<p>Solutions that the provincial government can implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support community-based organizations to identify seniors at risk and help seniors navigate systems.• Support efforts to prevent social isolation to help reduce costs on the acute health care system.
Question to ask candidates	<p>If elected, what will you do to ensure socially isolated seniors or those at risk of isolation are connected and supported?</p>

