

CARP Nursing Home Safety Poll Report January 15, 2015

Key Findings

Close to one half of members agree nursing homes in Canada are no safer now than they were before the L'Isle Verte fire last year, one quarter know someone in care in a nursing home and one third disagree they would be safe in the event of a fire.

Members consider infectious diseases the most dangerous threat to health and safety in nursing homes, followed by staff neglect. There is virtual unanimous agreement, though, that the most important step to take in preventing nursing home fires is retrofitting sprinklers in all homes.

There is virtual unanimous agreement that members would avoid a nursing home which did not have sprinklers retrofitted, and they see the lack of provincial legislation mandating this as being due to the high costs and the fact it is not a government priority. They think governments should either pay the cost of retrofitting homes that can't afford it or close them down.

Close to half disagree most nursing home operators and staff are well-trained to protect residents in case of fire. While two thirds agree ageism is at work in government foot dragging on mandating retrofitted sprinklers, they are more likely to blame the high cost.

There is virtually unanimous agreement nursing homes should be liable for the health and safety of their residents and that residents have the right to be safe. Most members have the perception the current government places the interests of nursing home operators above those of nursing home residents.

After briefly tying the Liberals in member voting preference, the Conservatives have retreated to second place, with the NDP in third place. It is thought the temporary resurgence of the Conservative vote was due to the robust anti-terrorist messages the Prime Minister was communicating in the wake of the attack on Parliament.

Detailed Findings

Close to one half of members disagree nursing homes in Canada are any safer now than they were a year ago, before the L'Isle Verte fire (46%).

It is now a year since the tragic fire at the L'Isle Verte nursing home in Quebec in which 32 residents died in the part of the home that did not have sprinklers. The residents in the new, sprinklered section survived. Do you agree or disagree nursing homes are any safer in the event of a fire in Canada now than they were last year?

AGREE	16%
Agree strongly	2%
Agree	14%
DISAGREE	46%
Disagree	34%
Disagree strongly	12%
DON'T KNOW	38%

One quarter of members know someone in a nursing home (25%), and very few members themselves are residents (1%).

Are you currently in a nursing home, or is someone close to you in a nursing home?

YES	26%
Me	1%
Someone I know	25%
No	75%

The plurality of members who know someone in a home agree that they would be safe in a fire (42%), compared to a third who do not agree (34%). Fully one quarter don't know (24%)

Do you agree or disagree the residents in this nursing home would be safe in the event of a fire?

AGREE	42%
Agree strongly	12%
Agree	30%
DISAGREE	34%
Disagree	26%
Disagree strongly	8%
DON'T KNOW	24%

Infectious diseases like the flu are seen to be the biggest danger in nursing homes (36%) followed by staff neglect (20%). Just one tenth see fire as the greatest danger (13%). Almost no one sees food borne illnesses as a serious danger (less than 0.5%).

As far as you know, what is the greatest single danger to resident safety in nursing homes?

Infectious diseases	36%
Neglect by staff	20%
Fire	13%
Abuse by other residents	8%
Abuse by staff	6%
Poor sanitation/cleanliness	5%
Food borne illnesses	*
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	13%

The vast majority, three quarters, agree retrofitting all nursing homes with sprinklers is the best solution to preventing fatalities in nursing home fires (76%). One tenth mention better staff training (10%).

What is the single most important step that could be taken to prevent fatalities in nursing home fires?

Retrofitting all nursing homes with sprinklers	76%
Better staff training	10%
Regular fire drills	4%
Prominently displayed escape routes	1%
Fireproof doors	1%
DON'T KNOW	6%
MEASURES NOT NEEDED	1%

One half of members are not aware that most provinces do not mandate retrofitting sprinklers (53%).

Since 1997, national building codes have required sprinklers in all newly built care homes, but not in pre-existing homes. Most provinces have not taken action to mandate sprinklers for homes built before 1997, with the exceptions of Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador but with 5 – 10 year delays. Were you aware that in Canada most nursing homes built before 1997 still are not legally required to have fire sprinklers?

Yes, aware	47%
No, not aware	53%

The vast majority agree a lack of sprinklers would cause them to avoid a nursing home without them (88%).

Would a lack of fire sprinklers in a nursing home affect your decision to live in a nursing home or to choose a home for a family member?

Yes, would avoid home with no sprinklers	88%
No, not concerned about sprinklers	4%
DON'T KNOW	7%

Members are equally likely to think the reason provinces don't mandate retrofitting sprinklers is the high cost (39%) or the fact this isn't a government priority (34%). One fifth say voters need to exert more pressure (17%), either all voters (12%) or just seniors (5%).

Sprinkler systems reduce fire-related injuries and deaths by 80%, compared to non-sprinkler care homes. They reduce property damage by 68%. It costs much more to retrofit a care home with sprinklers than to install them during construction. Why do you think most provincial governments have not legislated retrofitting care homes with sprinklers?

Cost too great to retrofit	39%
Nursing home safety not government priority	34%
All voters need to exert more pressure	12%
Seniors need to exert more pressure	5%
Unconscious ageism	5%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	3%

Members are equally likely to say homes that can't afford to retrofit sprinklers should close (24%) or that the government should bear the costs of retrofitting (27%). A further one fifth think homes (17%) or the government (10%) should be liable in the event of deaths caused by lack of retrofits. It should be pointed out that governments are by definition not liable.

The costs of fire safety retrofitting include expanding water mains and ensuring sufficient water pressure as well as installing the sprinklers and fire walls and doors throughout the home and can therefore be costly. What is the best solution to this issue?

Government to fund retrofits	27%
Close homes if not retrofitted	24%
Homes to be liable in event of death if no retrofit	17%
Government to be liable in event of death if no retrofit	10%
Community to fundraise for retrofit	4%
Homes to be excused retrofitting if too costly	4%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	15%

On average, those who think homes should have a grace period to retrofit think it should be about 2 years. One tenth think retrofits should be done immediately, if mandated.

If fire safety retrofit is required by law, how long should care homes have to fully comply?

AVG # OF YEARS	2.1 Years
Immediately	11%
As long as they need to take	2%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	3%

The plurality of members, about half, disagree nursing home operators and staff are generally well trained to protect residents in a fire (46%).

Do you agree or disagree most care homes staff and operators are well-trained and prepared to protect residents in fires and other emergency situations?

AGREE	26%
Agree strongly	2%
Agree	24%
DISAGREE	46%
Disagree	36%
Disagree strongly	10%
DON'T KNOW	29%

Two thirds agree government foot-dragging on mandating sprinkler retrofits is due to ageism.

Including the fire at L'Isle Verte, there have been 140 deaths due to fire in ten separate nursing homes in Canada. Do you agree or disagree that government foot-dragging on making sprinklers required for ALL nursing homes is due to ageism?

AGREE	62%
Agree strongly	25%
Agree	37%
DISAGREE	21%
Disagree	18%
Disagree strongly	3%
DON'T KNOW	17%

Members are much more likely to agree that this foot dragging is due to the high cost of retrofitting (86%), and very few disagree (6%).

Do you agree or disagree that government foot-dragging on making sprinklers required for ALL nursing homes is due to the high costs required for pre-existing private and public care homes to retrofit?

AGREE	86%
Agree strongly	31%
Agree	55%
DISAGREE	6%
Disagree	4%
Disagree strongly	3%
DON'T KNOW	8%

Virtually all members agree nursing homes should be liable for the health and safety of their residents at all times (92%).

Do you agree or disagree that all nursing homes should be legally liable for the health and safety of their residents at all times?

AGREE	92%
Agree strongly	56%
Agree	36%
DISAGREE	6%
Disagree	5%
Disagree strongly	1%
DON'T KNOW	4%

Every member agrees nursing home residents are owed the right to be safe (99%).

Do you agree or disagree that every resident of a nursing home in Canada has the right to be safe and protected from preventable harm, abuse or neglect?

AGREE	99%
Agree strongly	80%
Agree	19%
DISAGREE	1%
Disagree	*
Disagree strongly	*
DON'T KNOW	1%

Two thirds of members agree the current government places the interests of nursing home operators above those of residents (64%), but one fifth do not know (20%).

Do you agree or disagree the current government places the interests of nursing home operators above those of nursing home residents?

AGREE	64%
Agree strongly	25%
Agree	39%
DISAGREE	16%
Disagree	13%
Disagree strongly	3%
DON'T KNOW	20%

Electoral Preference

After briefly tying the Liberals in member voting preference, the Conservatives have retreated to second place (37%) behind the Liberals (46%). However, members are slightly more likely to think the Conservatives will win the next election (50%) than they do the Liberals (47%). Expectation of victory has been shown to be an effective predictive electoral measure.

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you support/and which party do you EXPECT to win the next election?

	Vote For	Expect To Win
Liberals	46%	47%
Conservatives	37%	50%
NDP	12%	2%
Green	4%	*

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More than 1000 CARP Poll™ online panel members responded to this poll between January 13 and 15, 2015. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is about plus or minus 3%, 19 times out of 20