

CARP Pre Budget Poll Report April 2, 2015

Key Findings

Most members do not agree the Canadian government does a good job of tending to seniors' needs and concerns, and when asked what these concerns are, health care reform and ensuring equal opportunity for all age groups come first. The leading social determinant of health is seen to be, naturally, income, followed by retirement security, nutrition and education. When asked which factors most impact quality of life, health care and pension reform are seen to be the most important, rather than income inequality or housing.

Most members think significant pension reform is necessary to ensure seniors don't outlive their money though few agree that it's personally important to them to reduce the age of OAS to 65 again, they agree it is important for Canada. For almost every other CARP advocacy measure, however, members exhibit close to unanimous agreement, including:

- **Income supports for single seniors**
- **Increasing amount earned before OAS clawbacks**
- **Increasing OAS/GIS for low income seniors**
- **Ending retroactive termination of pension benefits**
- **Treating health care patients as "citizens" rather than "consumers"**
- **Health care in Canada to reflect Canada Health Act goals**
- **Health care system must undergo radical transformative change**
- **Federal government must re-engage in national health care debate**
- **Government to address social determinants of health**
- **Support for caregivers**
- **National pharmacare program**
- **Importance of chronic as well as acute or clinical care**
- **Home care support for dementia and end-of-life care**
- **Seniors' access to age-appropriate housing**
- **Income inequality is growing**

A seniors' housing strategy is seen to hinge on two different thrusts - allowing seniors to stay at home and providing affordable housing. The best way to solve income inequality is seen to be a National Guaranteed Minimum Annual Income, as well as a Universal Pension Plan to supplement CPP, a limit to CEO salaries and increased income supports for low income seniors.

Most members disagree with replacing income testing for need with means testing, and few agree seniors should be forced to sell the family home when they need to move into care. Fully one half would withhold their vote from a politician who supported means testing, even if it were the party usually voted for.

The Liberals continue to lead in member voting preference, trailed by the Conservatives. The NDP is in third place, but is increasing in support at the expense of the other two parties. Despite this, members are more likely to expect the Conservatives to win the next election than they are the Liberals.

Detailed Findings

Three quarters of members think the Canadian government does not respond well to the concerns of older Canadians (74%).

The federal budget will be tabled soon, and CARP has made numerous submissions on behalf of older Canadians. How well does this government respond to and act on the concerns of seniors and older Canadians?

WELL	20%
Extremely well	1%
Very well	5%
Well	14%
NOT WELL	74%
Not very well	47%
Not at all well	27%
DON'T KNOW	5%

Members say either that seniors want health care reform (22%) or equal opportunities and benefits for all age groups (20%) most, and these are followed by, in a pack, effective government (13%), economic stability (12%) or pension reform (11%). Few say they want tax benefits and credits designed only for seniors (9%).

If you were asked to describe “what seniors want” in a single phrase, which one would you use?

Health care reform	22%
Equal opportunity for all age groups	20%
Government that gets things done	13%
Economic stability	12%
Pension reform	11%
Tax benefits/credits for seniors only	9%
Affordable housing	6%
Political stability	2%
Jobs and growth	2%
SOMETHING ELSE	2%

Income is, naturally, seen to be the most important social determinant of health (36%), followed by, in a pack, retirement security (18%), nutrition (13%) and education (12%).

What is the most important social determinant of health?

Income	36%
Retirement security	18%
Nutrition	13%
Education	12%
Age	9%
Housing	4%
Geography	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	7%

Health care is the one factor with the strongest impact on quality of life for seniors (52%), followed by pension reform (30%). Income inequality (8%) and housing (7%) are not seen to have that much impact.

Which of the following has the greatest impact on the quality of life for seniors in Canada?

Health care	52%
Pension reform	30%
Income inequality	8%
Low cost housing	7%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	3%

Two thirds of members (69%) think it important that the government engage in significant pension reform, and one quarter find it “extremely important” (27%).

CARP has been advocating for major pension reforms ahead of the budget. How important is it to you that the government undertakes significant pension reform to ensure older Canadians do not outlive their money?

IMPORTANT	69%
Extremely important	27%
Very important	22%
Important	20%
NOT IMPORTANT	30%
Not very important	17%
Not at all important	13%
DON'T KNOW	2%

While pension reform is important, members agree lowering the age for OAS back to 65 is not important to them personally (67%), which is an indication that they have the welfare of others in mind.

How important is it to you personally that the government restore the eligibility age for OAS from 67 to 65?

IMPORTANT	32%
Extremely important	12%
Very important	8%
Important	12%
NOT IMPORTANT	67%
Not very important	22%
Not at all important	45%
DON'T KNOW	1%

The vast majority agree with CARP's specific pension reform demands (89%) and half agree "strongly" (53%).

Among the specific pension reforms CARP calls for are income supports for single seniors, increasing the amount earned before OAS clawbacks, increasing OAS/GIS for low income seniors and ending retroactive termination of pension benefits. Do you agree or disagree with these demands?

AGREE	89%
Agree strongly	53%
Agree	36%
DISAGREE	6%
Disagree	5%
Disagree strongly	1%
DON'T KNOW	5%

There is almost unanimous agreement that treating patients like citizens instead of consumers is important (94%) and one half deem it “extremely important” (51%).

CARP has called for health care providers to start treating patients as “health care citizens”. How important is it to you that health care providers stop treating patients like “consumers” and start treating them like “citizens”, with rights and the leading role in their care?

IMPORTANT	94%
Extremely important	51%
Very important	28%
Important	15%
NOT IMPORTANT	4%
Not very important	3%
Not at all important	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

It is similarly unanimously important that health care reflect the goals of the Canada Health Act (96%), and almost 6-in-10 describe it as “extremely important” (58%).

How important is it to you that health care in Canada mirror the values described in the Canada Health Act, a major CARP demand, which are Universality, Accessibility and Comprehensiveness?

IMPORTANT	96%
Extremely important	58%
Very important	26%
Important	12%
NOT IMPORTANT	3%
Not very important	2%
Not at all important	1%
DON'T KNOW	1%

There is likewise almost unanimous agreement Canada's health care system must undergo radical change (89%) and, again, one half think it "extremely important" (48%).

Do you agree or disagree Canada's health care system must undergo transformative, root and branch change to achieve the goals discussed above?

AGREE	89%
Agree strongly	48%
Agree	41%
DISAGREE	5%
Disagree	4%
Disagree strongly	1%
DON'T KNOW	5%

There is almost unanimous agreement the federal government must re-engage in the health care debate to ensure radical change (90%), and 6-in-10 agree "strongly" (58%).

The federal government has reduced its role in the national health care system. CARP has called for more engagement at the national level. Do you agree or disagree the federal government must become re-engaged in the management of the health care system in order for significant change to occur?

AGREE	90%
Agree strongly	58%
Agree	32%
DISAGREE	7%
Disagree	5%
Disagree strongly	2%
DON'T KNOW	3%

There is unanimous agreement it is important the government address social determinants of health (94%) and close to half think it “extremely important” (44%).

How important is it that the government addresses the social determinants of health, such as income or housing as well as disease prevention and treatment?

IMPORTANT	94%
Extremely important	44%
Very important	29%
Important	21%
NOT IMPORTANT	5%
Not very important	4%
Not at all important	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

There is unanimity in the importance of supporting caregivers (95%), and more than 4-in-10 say it is “extremely important” (43%).

In addition to the formal health care system, more than 8 million informal caregivers take on the burden of caring for loved ones with no support from the government or from employers. How important is it that the government increase support for informal caregivers?

IMPORTANT	95%
Extremely important	43%
Very important	31%
Important	21%
NOT IMPORTANT	5%
Not very important	4%
Not at all important	1%
DON'T KNOW	1%

There is almost universal agreement on the need for national pharmacare (89%), and two thirds agree “strongly” (62%).

CARP advocates for a universal, national pharmacare plan with no co-pays which could save between \$5 billion and \$10 billion a year in the cost of prescription drugs. Do you agree or disagree Canada should have a national pharmacare plan?

AGREE	89%
Agree strongly	62%
Agree	27%
DISAGREE	7%
Disagree	4%
Disagree strongly	3%
DON'T KNOW	4%

There is even stronger agreement that chronic care is as important as clinical and acute care (93%) and one half agree strongly (50%).

Do you agree or disagree that high quality chronic care, for diseases such as COPD, diabetes and cardiovascular conditions is a critical to health care as primary care in hospitals and clinics?

AGREE	93%
Agree strongly	50%
Agree	43%
DISAGREE	4%
Disagree	3%
Disagree strongly	1%
DON'T KNOW	4%

Almost all members agree home care for dementia and end-of-life care is also as important as clinical care or acute care (94%), and more than half agree strongly (57%).

Dementia affects 750,000 Canadians and will strike thousands of Canadians in the next few years. Do you agree or disagree home care, for conditions such as dementia and end-of-life care, is as important to health care as primary care in hospitals and clinics?

AGREE	94%
Agree strongly	57%
Agree	37%
DISAGREE	4%
Disagree	3%
Disagree strongly	1%
DON'T KNOW	1%

The same unanimity exists with respect to the need for housing for seniors (94%), and more than 4-in-10 think it “extremely” important (43%).

How important is it that the government works to ensure every Canadian has access to needs-appropriate housing, including affordable and supportive housing and assisted living?

IMPORTANT	94%
Extremely important	43%
Very important	29%
Important	22%
NOT IMPORTANT	5%
Not very important	4%
Not at all important	1%
DON'T KNOW	1%

The most mentioned element of a national seniors' housing strategy is affordability (38%), and it is matched by the opposite idea of allowing seniors to stay at home (36%). Availability is seen to be key by some (10%).

What are the elements of a national housing strategy that should be targeted to older Canadians?

Affordability	38%
Allowing seniors to stay in their homes	36%
Availability	10%
Access to services/retail/etc	7%
Special design/grab bars/etc	3%
Doctor on call	2%
Downtown/central	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	4%

There is very wide agreement income inequality is growing (86%) and more than half agree strongly (54%).

Do you agree or disagree income inequality is growing in Canada?

AGREE	86%
Agree strongly	54%
Agree	32%
DISAGREE	9%
Disagree	7%
Disagree strongly	2%
DON'T KNOW	5%

Solutions to income inequality are seen to be mainly a guaranteed minimum income (23%), followed by, in a pack, a supplementary Universal Pension Plan (17%), limiting CEO salaries (16%) or increasing low income supports (14%).

What's the best way to prevent income equality from becoming a greater problem?

Guaranteed Annual Minimum Income	23%
Supplementary Universal Pension Plan or UPP	17%
Limit CEO salaries	16%
Increase income supports for low income	14%
Significant increase in minimum wage	7%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	15%
INCOME INEQUALITY NOT A PROBLEM	4%
NOTHING GOVERNMENT CAN DO	5%

Members are relatively equally likely to say they vote to secure their own futures (31%), that of their children (28%) or their grandchildren (35%).

When you cast a vote, whose future are you voting to secure?

Mine	31%
Children's	28%
Grandchildren's	35%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	7%

Two thirds of members (67%) disagree with “means testing” replacing “income testing” for aid in nursing home fees (and other arenas).

In most provinces, when seniors need help paying for nursing home care, they are “income tested”, where all their available sources of income, including pensions and investments, are calculated to determine their need. In Newfoundland and now New Brunswick, however, seniors in need will be “means tested”, in which both income and assets, including the family home are calculated, and need is determined on the total value. Do you agree or disagree with this change?

AGREE	24%
Agree strongly	6%
Agree	18%
DISAGREE	67%
Disagree	33%
Disagree strongly	34%
DON'T KNOW	9%

The wide majority disagree seniors should have to sell or mortgage the family home to afford nursing home care (81%).

Do you agree or disagree it's fair to ask seniors to mortgage or sell the family home if one partner needs financial help entering a nursing home?

AGREE	14%
Agree strongly	2%
Agree	12%
DISAGREE	81%
Disagree	33%
Disagree strongly	48%
DON'T KNOW	5%

One half of members would withhold their vote from a politician who supported replacing income testing with means testing, even if they normally would support this politician (49%). Three-in-ten say their vote would not hinge on this issue (30%) and just fewer than one tenth would not withhold their vote (8%)., which indicates this is a potent ballot box issue.

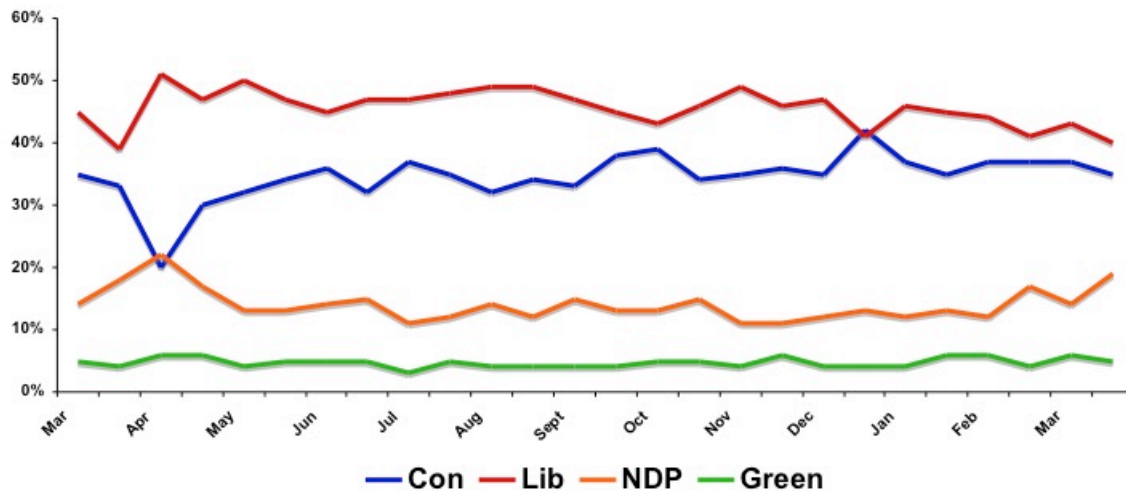
Would you or would you not withhold your vote from a politician, even one you would normally support, who backed means testing over income testing as a way of determine whether older Canadians need financial help in their retirement?

Would withhold vote	49%
Wouldn't withhold vote	8%
Not an issue which would decide my vote	30%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	13%

Electoral Preference

After briefly tying the Liberals for first place, the Conservatives have returned to second place (35%) where they have been for a year or more. The Liberals lead (40%) and the NDP is in third (19%), with a recent increase (from 14%) at the expense of the other two parties.

Despite a member preference for the Liberals, most expect the Conservatives to win the next election (54%), and this trend is mostly NDP voters who realize their party will not win (1%), but who do not think the Liberals can (40%).



Which party do you EXPECT to win the next election?

	Dec 31	Jan 15	Jan 31	Feb 10	Mar 10	Mar 24
Liberals	46%	47%	44%	45%	45%	40%
Conservatives	51%	50%	53%	52%	52%	54%
NDP	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	1%
Green	*	*	*	*	*	*

About 2000 CARP Poll™ online panel members responded to this poll between March 24 and 31, 2015. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is about plus or minus 2%, 19 times out of 20