

# Trudeau promises to boost federal income supplement for low-income seniors



Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau at a campaign stop in Quebec City, Thursday. (Sean Kilpatrick/Canadian Press)

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau announced today a plan to increase guaranteed income supplement (GIS) payments by \$500 a year for eligible seniors — a boost the party says would benefit more than two million people over the age of 65.

Speaking to reporters at an event in Quebec City, Trudeau said a re-elected Liberal government would hike the GIS because "seniors deserve a safe and comfortable retirement after a lifetime of work" and current benefits just aren't good enough.

Single seniors who qualify for GIS would get \$500 more a year under the Liberal plan, while couples would get \$750. A single, widowed or divorced senior must have an annual income of \$18,984 or less to qualify for GIS — a program designed to help people with little, if any, retirement savings.

"Our announcement today is about putting more money in the pockets of the most vulnerable seniors," Trudeau said. "Canadians need to feel confident that as they or their parents age, they will be safe and comfortable."

Trudeau said that, over the past six years of his government, the poverty rate for seniors has dropped by 20 per cent due in part to GIS increases and one-time payments to seniors to help them cope with the pandemic crisis.

In the last federal budget, the Liberal government also set aside more money to increase Old Age Security (OAS) payouts by 10 per cent for all seniors 75 years of age and over, starting next year. That hike will increase payments by \$766 a year, or about \$64 a month.



Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet says the Liberals' promised OAS boost isn't good enough. (Graham Hughes/The Canadian Press)

The age-restricted OAS boost was criticized by Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, who has said that all seniors — not just those over 75 — should get a bump.

On the campaign trail last week, Blanchet said he'd try to force the next government to spend more on seniors.

"As soon as we return to Parliament, the Bloc will propose a bill so that, in addition to what was in the overall budget, on this very specific point, it will have to be more than 10 per cent. It is not true that the seniors' pension can increase by \$60 a month and that we will consider that as acceptable," he said.

Trudeau said that if his government is re-elected, he'll double the home accessibility tax credit, which would provide up to an additional \$1,500 in support to help seniors stay in their homes longer.

The Liberals announced earlier this week plans to introduce a "multigenerational home renovation tax credit" to offset the costs of adding a secondary unit to a home so that elderly people can live with their relatives.

Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole has also promised more benefits for seniors. In the party's election platform, the Conservatives vowed to create a "Canada seniors care benefit" which would pay \$200 a month to any Canadian who is living with or taking care of a parent over the age of 70.

O'Toole has promised to protect the pensions of people who work for companies facing financial distress.

O'Toole is pledging to give priority to pensioners over companies and most other creditors during bankruptcy or restructuring proceedings.

Under his plan, executives at a company going through a restructuring couldn't pay themselves bonuses until the workplace pension plan is fully funded. Pointing to the insolvency of Sears as a recent example, O'Toole said workers shouldn't be forced to take major cuts to pensions when their former employer goes bankrupt.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh has said a government led by him would help caregivers looking after elderly relatives. Singh has said the existing Canada caregiver tax credit should be refundable, a move that would provide money to people who give up their jobs to care for a loved one.

Singh also has promised a national pharmacare program which would provide prescription medicine for all seniors. This sort of program is outside

of federal jurisdiction and would require negotiations with the provinces and territories, which have constitutional authority over health care.

"I know it's going to be hard — it's going to be hard to win over the premiers," Singh said today at campaign stop in Winnipeg. "But we're not going to back down. We believe in people and we're going to make it happen."