



Fall 2020 Budget Consultations

Submitted by: CanAge
October 16, 2020

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Dear Honourable Rod Phillips,

CanAge is Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy Organization. As an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit organization we educate and mobilize people on the issues that matter to older Canadians. CanAge has identified critical areas that require urgent investment to improve seniors' lives in the VOICES of Canada's Seniors: A Roadmap to an Age-Inclusive Canada (www.CanAge.ca/voices).

Violence & Abuse Prevention

Since the pandemic, elder abuse and neglect appears to have significantly increased due to financial constraints, isolation, and confinement with one's abuser. Many elder abuse and neglect response agencies are anecdotally reporting a ten-fold increase of incidents since March 2020.

Recommendations:

- Increase funding for Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO), which has not received a funding raise since 2008 to equal levels of domestic violence and intimate partner violence funding. This will allow EAPO to cover more ground and return to more effective and local interaction with community partners. Move EAPO oversight to the Ministry of Health.

Infection Prevention & Disaster Response

Seniors in Ontario are significantly under-vaccinated, leading to poor health outcomes and the spread of infectious diseases. In the time of COVID-19, it is critically important to have proactive and robust infection prevention measures. Seniors in Canada are disproportionately harmed by natural disasters and climate change (WHO, 2018). Living longer often entails managing chronic conditions and diseases. Our health system must invest in cost-effective preventive care to meet the needs of our aging population.

Recommendations:

- Fully-fund all seniors and those immunocompromised for the best-in-class pneumonia vaccine.
- Designate people 70+ immuno-compromised due to high-risk for COVID-19 and prioritize COVID-19 vaccinations for this population.
- Cover all vaccines recommended by NACI for all Ontario's seniors
- Create a provincial disaster plan for seniors with specific sub-plans for people in Long-Term Care (LTC) and congregate care settings, community settings and rural and remote regions.

Caregiving, Long-Term Care, Home Care & Housing Resources

The crisis brought on by COVID-19 has exacerbated long-standing issues in LTC, including underfunding and understaffing. We agree with the Government of Ontario that the Canadian Armed Forces report provided a “wake up call” for the need to fix chronic systemic challenges in LTC.

Canadians are living longer and, towards end of life, have greater frailty, cognitive impairment, and unmet care needs. More than 430,000 Canadians have unmet home care needs (Gilmour, 2018). 89% of Canadians want more home and community care, and 88% want better access to LTC (CMA, 2015).

Recommendations:

- Increase funding in Ontario LTC to address challenges with outbreaks, infection control management, and inadequate resident care.
- Create a provincial integrated health and human resources aged-care staffing strategy to meet the care needs of the growing seniors population while upholding the rights and needs of overworked care providers in LTC and the community.
- Invest in providing increased quantity and quality of Care at Home, which is equitable across Ontario, and not dependent on postal code or ability to privately pay. Establish *Care at Home* as the primary provincial model of care.
- Invest in research, innovation, health and technological developments in aging with provincial financial support of our Ontario-based aging networks: AGE-WELL, Canadian Frailty Network, and National Initiative for Care of the Elderly (NICE)

Social Inclusion

Digital literacy and technology have become a necessity during the time of COVID-19. Seniors must use technology for social engagement, healthcare visits, and essential resources like groceries and supplies. It is critical to develop capacity for digital literacy and technological inclusion of seniors.

Recommendations:

- Create technology lending and training programs through community organizations.
- Invest in digital and technology lending or low-cost technology purchase programs for seniors.
- Prioritize this investment in rural and isolated communities.

Conclusion

We respectfully ask the ministry to carefully consider our recommendations and review the VOICES of Canada's Seniors: A Roadmap to an Age-Inclusive Canada (www.CanAge.ca/voices) for detailed recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,



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