



VOICES

February 2021 Budget Consultations

Submitted by: CanAge
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Dear Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy,

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CanAge is Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy Organization. As a non-partisan, nonprofit seniors' 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 its **VOICES of Canada's Seniors: A Roadmap to an Age-Inclusive Canada** policy framework (www.CanAge.ca/voices).

A. Violence & Abuse Prevention

Since the pandemic, elder abuse and neglect has skyrocketed due to financial constraints, isolation, and confinement with one's abuser. Response agencies are reporting a 10x increase of calls in 2020.

Recommendations:

1. Significantly 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.

B. Infection Prevention & Disaster Response

Seniors in Ontario are significantly under-vaccinated, leading to poor health outcomes and the spread of infectious diseases.

Recommendations:

2. Designate all people 60+ immunocompromised due to COVID-19.
3. Create a transparent, accessible COVID-19 online / telephone vaccination booking and tracking system.
4. Deploy immediate COVID-19 vaccinations for seniors in long-term care (LTC), congregate care and community settings. Create drive-thru and door-to-door vaccination systems and walkable community vaccination hubs.

5. Cover all vaccines recommended by NACI for all Ontario's seniors.
6. Fund shingles (Recombinant Zoster Vaccine - RZV) vaccine for all people 50+.
7. Ensure ordering of vaccine supply to meet the standard of 80% uptake in healthy persons and 90% in high-risk persons for influenza.
8. Create a Provincial Emergency Response Plan for Seniors.

C. 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. It has led to a tragedy of unconscionable proportions.

Recommendations:

9. Immediately and significantly increase funding to LTC to address infection outbreaks, inadequate resident care, and needed building upgrades.
10. Diversify *types of care* provided in LTC. Stop relying on PSWs to provide most types of care. We need physicians, physios and other allied health providers in LTC.
11. Work with the federal government to create, and then regulate to meet, National LTC Standards.
12. Agree to a tethering of future transferred federal funds to National LTC Standards.
13. Mass-hire and train personal support workers (PSW) and other LTC staff, for good jobs with pensions and benefits, similar to Quebec's COVID-19 hiring model.
14. Create and fund the position of Provincial Chief Medical Officer for LTC. Create and fund the position of Regional Chief Medical Officer for LTC to oversee each of Ontario's 5 health regions.

15. Invest in programs to ensure Franco-Ontarians and multicultural seniors receive appropriate care and services.
16. Make “emotion-focused” care the standard in LTC.
17. Increase raw food funding for LTC residents to \$15 from \$10 a day. Ensure LTC food is high quality, nutritious, well-balanced. Implement an inflationary escalator for food, and provide funding for on-site food preparation in LTC.
18. Build smaller, innovative home-like LTC, including Dementia Villages.
19. Create a provincial integrated health and human resources staffing strategy across home care and LTC. Provide educational grants and paid training incentives.
20. Provide a government backstop for infectious spread liability insurance for LTC.
21. Significantly invest in Home Care (Care at Home) as the primary provincial model of seniors’ care.
22. Invest in “swing space” to house residents during LTC building upgrades.
23. Provide immediate investment to ensure LTC meets fire codes, has modern HVAC and air conditioning in residents’ rooms.
24. Invest in research, innovation and technology to aging networks: AGE-WELL, Canadian Frailty Network, and National Initiative for Care of the Elderly (NICE).
25. Invest in making Ontario a “Dementia-Friendly Province”.

D. Social Inclusion

Digital literacy and technology have become absolute necessities during the time of COVID-19. Seniors must now use technology for social engagement, health care visits, and essential resources like groceries and supplies.

Recommendations:

- 26. Invest in seniors' technology supports, digital literacy training through community organizations and libraries.
- 27. Invest in high speed internet in rural and underserved communities, and subsidize connectivity for those in need.

Recommendations:

- 28. Increase funding to the *Seniors Community Grant* and the *Inclusive Community Grant* programs to support active healthy aging.
- 29. Implement Parks and Recreation Ontario's HIGH FIVE™ Quality Training Standards for programs working with older adults.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Watts".

**Laura Tamblyn Watts, LLB
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CanAge**