



VOICES

Quebec Budget 2021 Consultations

Submitted by: CanAge
February 14, 2021

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Dear Honourable Éric Girard,

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).

A. Infection Prevention & Disaster Response

In the time of COVID-19, it is critically important to have proactive and robust infection prevention measures to keep our more vulnerable citizens as healthy as possible. Seniors in Québec are significantly under-vaccinated against preventable diseases like the shingles, influenza and pneumococcal infections.

Background

Specifically-formulated Influenza Vaccines:

Adult vaccinations must be available with as few barriers as possible to ensure effective distribution and uptake. Our health system must invest in cost-effective preventive care to keep our aging population safe and healthy.

Quebec does not even have an ongoing program for its most vulnerable seniors who reside in long-term care facilities. Federal funding allowed specifically formulated seniors' influenza vaccine (adjuvanted / high dose flu) to be provided for the *first time in 2020* in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no clear ongoing commitment for Quebec to fund this in future years.

Recommendations:

1. Fully-fund all seniors (65+) and those immunocompromised for the best-in-class vaccines.
2. Create and fund a best-in-class shingles vaccine program covering all people 50+.
3. Create funding programs for specifically-formulated seniors' influenza vaccine for *all people 65+* as recommended by NACI. Amend the INSPQ recommendation to modernize and broaden this coverage.
4. Create and fund innovative vaccination gateways including door-to-door, drive-thru, community hub and pharmacy-based programs for COVID-19 and other INSPQ and NACI recommended vaccines.
5. Ensure and fund pharmacists to be able to distribute all adult vaccines without additional costs.
6. Speed up COVID19 vaccinations in priority populations. Invest in ensuring that all seniors in CHLSD and congregate care settings and their care providers receive the COVID19 vaccinations first.
7. Urgently invest in speeding up COVID19 vaccinations for those receiving homecare and their formal and informal caregivers as priority populations, then all Quebec seniors.
8. Fund and create a *Provincial Seniors' Emergency Response Plan* ("PSERP"), with specific sub-plans for people in CLHSD and congregate care settings, community settings and rural and remote regions. Ensure that this PSERP also has "offline" components so the information can be accessed during power outages.

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

The crisis brought on by COVID-19 has exacerbated long-standing issues in CHLSD's, including underfunding and understaffing. Canadians are living longer and, towards end of life, have greater frailty, cognitive impairment, and unmet care needs. We applaud the Quebec government for increasing CHLSD sector capacity through accelerated training programs and recognizing family caregivers with Bill 56 and we hope to see more capacity building in both CHLSD and home and community care settings.

Recommendations:

9. Increase funding in CHLSDs to address challenges with outbreaks, infection control management, and inadequate resident care.
10. 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 CHLSD and the community.
11. Invest in providing increased quantity and quality of Care at Home, which is equitable across Quebec, and not dependent on postal code or ability to privately pay. Establish *Care at Home* as the primary provincial model of care.
12. Work with federal and other provincial governments to create, and then regulate to meet, National Long-Term Care (CHLSD) Standards.
13. Work with the Federal government to create a workable solution for dedicated CHLSD funds in Quebec.
14. Fund immediate reimbursement for actual uncovered COVID-19 related costs to CHLSD. Work with the Federal government to cover these costs as appropriate.

15. Provide and urgently flow dedicated funding to achieve an average of 4 hours of worked care a day per resident.
16. Invest in appropriate staffing ratios both in terms of number of staff per resident, as well as a greater mix of expertise in staffing. Fund an integrated holistic care team. Expand funding for staff beyond nurses and orderlies to include allied health professionals and in home physician care.
17. Provide a government backstop or strategy for infectious spread liability insurance for CHLSD as needed or appropriate.
18. 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 CHLSD and the community.
19. Invest in research, innovation, health and technological developments in aging. Investment in technology innovation through AGE-WELL, and knowledge sharing through the National Initiative for Care of the Elderly (NICE).

C. Economic Security

Quebec was already enduring fiscal pressure as a result of a rapidly aging population; almost 27% of the population is over 60 years of age.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, older adults and those close to traditional retirement age are increasingly hard hit with the economic downturn. Many will need more flexibility to decide how to manage their money. Others already face dire straits and will need to ensure that they can earn income for longer to replace lost assets, particularly with interest rates at a record low. Pensions are a lifeline to those seniors who have them.

COVID-19 has added economic pressures to seniors through increased consumer costs (delivery services, internet bills, transportation etc). Seniors are also caregivers, and many need additional support in that role as well, which can keep older out of the workforce. This disproportionately negatively affects older women.

20. Raise and amend the Seniors Assistance Tax Credit according to FADOQ's recommendations. Make this tax credit refundable.
21. Work to enhance pension security, including creating a Quebec Pension Benefit Guarantee fund. Ensure pensioners receive 100% of their deferred wages - the pension they were promised. Quebec should adopt a pensions guarantee fund model similar to Ontario's model. CanAge endorses FADOQ's submissions on pension guarantees and reform.
22. Invest in economic programs to reduce workplace barriers for older employees and invest in senior entrepreneurship programs - a proven economic engine for small business success.

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".

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President and CEO
CanAge
Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy Organization