



Ensuring Security and Dignity for Seniors

Policy Recommendations on Seniors

All Canadians deserve a secure and dignified retirement, especially after a lifetime of working hard and fulfilling commitments to their families, communities, and workplaces. However, in their later years many struggle with income and housing insecurity; a lack of affordable, quality care; the high costs of life-saving medication; and age discrimination in the workplace.

For the first time since Confederation, seniors now outnumber children in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, by 2030 nearly one in four Canadians will be aged 65 or over. Canada's aging population and the public policy challenges this brings is already touching every community across the country, including the Ukrainian Canadian community.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) advocates for concrete measures to address these challenges, which are becoming more pressing with each passing year. Along with other key stakeholders, we will work together with federal, provincial, and territorial governments to ensure that seniors across Canada are treated with the respect they deserve, proposing effective policy solutions to ensure security and dignity for Canadians moving into retirement age.

Ukrainian Canadians have long recognized the critical role that community organizations, church groups, and culturally-oriented long-term care homes have played for older adults in our community. We have seen first-hand that ethno-cultural seniors' organizations serve as effective delivery mechanisms to address the real-life challenges that seniors face in their later years. For example, the forty Ukrainian long-term care homes across Canada that serve our community have resulted in better health outcomes and higher rates of life satisfaction for seniors and their families. This is borne out by evidence-based policy studies of long-term care facilities. We will continue to work together with our provincial councils and member organizations to meet the Ukrainian community's demand for culturally-oriented organizations that serve older adults.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve Financial Security
- Support Pharmacare for Lower-Income Seniors
- Invest in Quality Care
- Promote Skills Training
- Support Caregivers

Recommendations

Improve Financial Security

Many Canadians are living with financial uncertainty due to the decline of workplace pension coverage and insufficient retirement savings. Some older adults are remaining in the workforce longer just to meet basic living needs, while others struggle because they are unable to work.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to review federal income security programs, and along with its provincial and territorial counterparts undertake a comprehensive review of regulations to protect and strengthen private sector pensions.

Support Pharmacare for Lower-Income Seniors

Many older adults struggle with the high costs of life-saving medications, but programs to assist lower-income seniors vary from province to province. The current patchwork of coverage across Canada is inconsistent, both in terms of income threshold and the drugs that are covered.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to work together with stakeholders and provincial and territorial governments, to ensure consistent and fair supports for seniors across the country to limit their out-of-pocket costs for life saving care.



Every Canadian deserves a secure and dignified retirement after a lifetime of hard work

Invest in Quality Care

Canadians want quality, safe, and affordable care in their later years, whether they remain in their homes or move to long-term care facilities. As the number of seniors continues to grow, it is clear that Canada must prepare for the housing and home care needs that this growth creates; even today, demand is greater than our current system can support. Current concerns about low ratios of caregivers to clients and lack of oversight have generated significant questions about the safety and well-being of residents in care homes.

The UCC calls on federal, provincial and territorial governments to work to ensure that investments are made in infrastructure, skills training, and staffing to ensure that older adults have access to safe and affordable quality care.

Promote Skills Training

Increasingly, many seniors want to remain active in the workplace through their retirement age. Statistics Canada has published data showing the labour market participation rate of seniors nearly doubled between 1995 and 2015 and are continuing to grow.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to support and promote skills training for seniors who want to retrain or upskill in order to remain active in the workforce.

Recognize Volunteers

Almost 12.5 million Canadians volunteered in 2007, contributing over 2.1 billion volunteer hours, equivalent to almost 1.1 million full-time jobs. Seniors are more likely than other age groups to be “top volunteers” accounting for 78% of all volunteer hours. Despite an overall decrease in volunteerism, the proportion of older Canadians engaged in volunteer work remains high and should be formally recognized and supported.

Support Caregivers

Many caregivers are providing unpaid support to older members of their families, often at great personal and financial cost, as many caregivers are also balancing raising a young families and full- or part-time paid employment. The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to consider a caregiver tax credit for family caregivers, which would help alleviate the financial stress of balancing work and family care. The Canadian government should also consider expanding the EI Compassionate Care Benefit to those who are caring for seriously ill older family members.

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