



Ensuring Security and Dignity for Seniors

Policy Recommendations on Seniors

All Canadians deserve a secure and dignified retirement, following a lifetime of working hard and supporting their families, communities and workplaces. However, in their later years many seniors struggle with income insecurity, the high costs of medication, and a lack of affordable, quality care.

The UCC advocates for concrete measures to address these challenges, which are becoming more pressing every year, and which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The UCC will work with government and community stakeholders to ensure that seniors across Canada are treated with the respect they deserve.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected seniors, with devastating effects in long-term care homes (LTCs). The Ukrainian Canadian community knows first-hand that community managed not-for-profit long-term care facilities offering culturally specific programming are able to provide compassionate and effective care for seniors. The forty Ukrainian long-term care homes and seniors' residences across Canada have seen demonstrably better health outcomes and higher rates of life satisfaction for seniors and their families than comparable for-profit institutions.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- National standards for long-term care
- Support caregivers
- Support Pharmacare for lower income seniors
- Promote Skills Training and Recognize Volunteers

Recommendations

National standards for long-term care

The UCC supports the Government of Canada's commitment to develop national standards for long-term care, including the Budget 2021 announcement of \$3 billion over five years "to support provinces and territories in ensuring standards for long-term care are applied and permanent changes are made."

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to engage widely with representatives of ethnocultural communities in developing national standards for long-term care.

National standards for long-term care homes (LTCs) must include provisions for a guaranteed liveable income for staff, who have had to give up employment in multiple facilities, provide paid sick days so that they do not come to work when they are ill, and provide mental health support for those caring for our loved ones.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to ensure that national standards for long-term care include provisions of a guaranteed liveable income, paid sick days and mental health support for staff.



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

Support caregivers

The UCC welcomes the announcement in Budget 2021 of the Age Well at Home initiative, which would provide \$90 million over three years to assist “community-based organizations in providing practical support that helps low-income and otherwise vulnerable seniors age in place.” The UCC will work with our member organizations to ensure that our community is well-informed about these initiatives and ensure that our organizations and support workers in our community can benefit from these new programs.

Many caregivers, predominantly women, provide unpaid support to older and disabled members of their families, often at great personal and financial cost, as they balance raising a young family and full- or part-time paid employment. Allowing seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible requires additional supports for in-home care.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to enhance the Canada Caregiver Credit for family caregivers, which would help alleviate the financial stress of balancing work and family care, and to expand the EI Compassionate Care benefits for those who are caring for seriously ill and/or older family members.

Support Pharmacare for lower income seniors

Many older adults struggle with the high costs of medications, but programs that assist lower-income seniors varies from province to province. The current patchwork of coverage across Canada is inconsistent, both in terms of income threshold and the medication that is eligible for coverage.

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 medication.

Promote Skills Training and Recognize Volunteers

According to Statistics Canada data, individuals aged 55 and over accounted for 36% of the working-age population in 2016 and is predicted to reach 40% by 2026. From 1996 to 2016, the labour force participation rate of individuals aged 55 and over increased from 24% to 38%. Increasingly, seniors want or need to remain active in the workplace through retirement age. The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to support skills training for seniors who want to retrain or upskill in order to remain in the labour force.

Volunteers have played a crucial role in alleviating or mitigating many of the deleterious social consequences of Covid-19, particularly in providing much-needed support and aid to the most vulnerable members of our society. The UCC has seen our community, member organizations, provincial councils, local branches and individuals respond with dedication to support those in who need it most with a wide range of programs and activities.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2018, almost 12.7 million people volunteered for charities, non-profits and community organizations—devoting approximately 1.7 billion hours to formal volunteer activities, a volume of work equivalent to more than 863,000 full-time year-round jobs. Canadians born before 1965 accounted for 71% of “top volunteers” — those dedicating 132 hours a year or more to volunteering.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to formally recognize and support the volunteer work that older Canadians undertake and the significant contributions to our communities made by older Canadians.

