

STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Canada's four provincial Seniors' Advocates urge action on barriers to healthy ageing
National Seniors Day statement echoes the United Nations theme
"Rethinking Systems for Longer Lives"

VICTORIA – On National Seniors Day, the Seniors' Advocates for British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, and New Brunswick are issuing a joint statement to celebrate the contributions of older adults and highlight barriers to healthy ageing facing seniors across Canada.

"Many seniors across the country are providing vital supports for their communities, families and neighbours, yet struggling to have their own basic needs met as their living costs soar. More and more older adults, many living on fixed incomes, are unable to find affordable housing and pay for medical devices and other services that support healthy ageing.

The Canada Health Act does not cover necessities such as medications, eyeglasses, hearing aids, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, ambulance services, home care services (medical and non-medical), transportation or mobility equipment. Some seniors have coverage through extended health benefits, but many do not. In provinces where coverage is available, it is often inadequate.

Federal income benefits aim to keep pace with inflation, but seniors often spend a greater portion of their income on essentials such as rent, food and health-related expenses, whose costs have risen faster than overall inflation. Income benefits are indexed to the Consumer Price Index rather than a measure specific to seniors' spending patterns and cost pressures.

Today is also the United Nations International Day of Older Persons, and this year's theme is 'The Age of Longevity: Rethinking Systems for Longer Lives.' People are living longer today than ever before, which is well worth celebrating. Increased longevity creates more opportunities for participation, contribution and connection. However, we want longer lives to be accompanied by a good quality of life, and that's only possible when people have access to affordable housing, adequate income and extended medical care as they age.

Canada's senior population will grow rapidly over the next decade and beyond. Today, a senior's ability to age well depends heavily on their location, income, health needs, family support, and whether they can afford services outside the publicly-funded system. Despite differences in provincial programs and service delivery models, seniors across Canada report many of the same barriers to healthy ageing.

We must do better to ensure all seniors have the supports they need to live long, healthy lives with dignity and independence, not only for today's older adults, but for tomorrow's as well."

Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate

Pamela Dawe, Newfoundland and Labrador Acting Seniors' Advocate

Leigh Anne Caron, Manitoba Seniors' Advocate

Kelly Lamrock, New Brunswick Child, Youth, and Seniors' Advocate

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Media contacts

Office of the Seniors Advocate – British Columbia

250-213-2024

osa.comms@gov.bc.ca

www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca

Office of the Seniors' Advocate – Newfoundland and Labrador

709-729-6603 or 1 833-729-6603 (toll-free)

seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca

www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca

Office of the Seniors' Advocate – Manitoba

431-373-8961

communications@seniorsadvocatemb.ca

Office of the New Brunswick Advocate

506-230-1032

justine.estey@gnb.ca

www.defenseur-nb-advocate.ca