

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Parliament of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

July 25th, 2018

Dear Minister Freeland:

We are a national consortium of experts who serve and advocate for the needs and rights of older people. We are delighted by the recent appointment of a new Minister of Seniors, and send our congratulations to the Honourable Filomena Tassi. We are also encouraged by our Government's commitment to support the health and economic well-being of all Canadians, and heartened by your promise to listen to, and to be informed by feedback from Canadians. It is in this spirit that we are writing today regarding the need for Canada to provide support and leadership with a goal of developing and ratifying a United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

In the context of massive global demographic shifts and an aging population, insightful and careful reflection by the leaders of our organizations has led to universal and strong support for the creation and implementation of a UN Convention to specifically recognize and protect the human rights of our older persons.

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons will:

- enshrine their rights as equal with any other segment of the population with the same legal rights as any other human being;
- categorically state that it is unacceptable to discriminate against older people throughout the world;
- clarify the state's role in the protection of older persons;
- provide them with more visibility and recognition both nationally and internationally, which is vitally important given the rate at which Canadian and other societies are ageing;
- advance the rights of older women at home and as a prominent factor in Canada's foreign policy;
- have a positive, real-world impact on the lives of older citizens who live in poverty, who are disproportionately older women, by battling ageism that contributes to poverty, ill-health, social isolation, and exclusion;
- support the commitment to improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples; members of the LGBTQ community, and visible and religious minorities; and,
- provide an opportunity for Canada to play a leadership role at the United Nations while at the same time giving expression to several of the Canadian government's stated foreign policy goals.

We have projected that the cost and impact of not having such a Convention would have a significant negative impact on both the physical and mental health of older Canadians. The profound and tragic consequence would have a domino effect in all domains of their lives including social determinants of health, incidence and prevalence of chronic diseases, social and psychological functioning, not to mention massive financial costs to

society. There is recognition of this need internationally and ILC-Canada, along with other Canadian NGOs and organizations have been active at the UN to help raise awareness of the ways a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons would contribute to all countries.

Changes have already been implemented by our Government that are consistent and aligned with a UN Convention, such as improving the income of vulnerable Canadian seniors, funding for long term care and support for community based dementia programs. These initiatives are all in keeping with support for a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. They are also reflective of our country's commitment to engage more fully with the United Nations and provide Canada the stage to demonstrate leadership on a vital international issue. It is an opportunity to champion the values of inclusive government, respect for diversity and human rights including the human rights of women.

Scientific evidence demonstrates that human rights treaties help to drive positive change in the lives of vulnerable groups of people. In many countries in the world, older people are not adequately protected by existing human rights law, as explicit references to age are exceedingly rare. Even in countries like Canada, where there are legal frameworks that safeguard older people, a Convention would provide an extra layer of protection, particularly if the Convention has a comprehensive complaints mechanism.

Older adults need to be viewed as a growing but underutilized human resource. By strengthening their active role in society including the workforce, they have tremendous capacity, knowledge, and wisdom to contribute to the economy and general well-being of humankind.

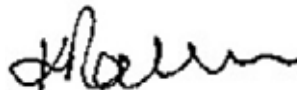
We are requesting you meet with our representatives, to discuss the vital role of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons and the role your government could play in improving the lives of older people in Canada and around the world. The fact that Canada is ageing is something to celebrate. We are all ageing, whether we are 20 or 85. This is a "golden opportunity" to showcase Canada as a nation that will relentlessly pursue doing the "right thing" for humanity by supporting a UN Convention that ensures that our future is bright.

Please accept our regards, and thank you for your attention to this request. We await your response.

Sincerely,



Margaret Gillis, President,
International Longevity Centre
Canada



Dr. Kiran Rabheru, Chair of the
Board, International Longevity
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Linda Garcia, Director, uOttawa
LIFE Research Institute

cc: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Filomena Tassi
Minister of Seniors

The Honourable Jean Yves Duclos
Minister for Families, Children and Social Development

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor
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Ambassador Marc-Andre Blanchard
Permanent Representative to Canada at the United Nations

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Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health
To promote seniors' mental health by connecting people, ideas and resources.
Coalition Canadienne pour la Santé Mentale des Personnes Âgées
Promouvoir la santé mentale des personnes âgées en reliant les personnes, les idées et les ressources.

Claire Checkland

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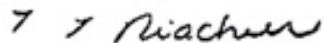
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