



Ottawa ON
April 24, 2020

The Honourable Deb Schulte
Minister of Seniors
Via Email

RE: Financial Support for Seniors during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Minister Schulte,

I am writing to express my concern about the lack of assistance being offered to Canadian Seniors in the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister has been saying for weeks now that support will be coming, yet seniors, the demographic most at risk from COVID-19, have yet to see any financial help sent to them directly.

While the government's announcements of \$9 million targeting programs assisting the most vulnerable and the reduction of the withdrawal rate for RIFFs are certainly positive, they do not come close to providing the relief the vast majority of Canadian seniors need right now.

There is no doubt that seniors right across the country are feeling the impact of increased costs and fixed incomes due to the pandemic. A few examples include:

- Increased food costs – many Canadians are reporting significant increases in the cost of groceries, and supply constraints may exacerbate the issue as we move through the pandemic;
- Extra delivery costs – seniors are the most vulnerable population to COVID-19 and have been warned to minimize possible exposure. As a result, many are now using delivery services to obtain necessities. In many instances these additional costs are putting strain on already stretched monthly household budgets;
- Dispensing fees – in many jurisdictions Canadians are now being limited to a 30-day supply of medications they require. For seniors who would normally receive a 90-day supply of their medication with one prescription refill, they will now be required to be three dispensing fees instead of one over the same period. For many, this increases costs beyond what they can currently bear.

The federal government needs to do more to take care of Canadian seniors in this incredibly challenging time. Too many of these people are being left out of the government's economic response entirely.

As recommended by my colleague Scott Duvall, I would like the government to immediately increase the payment amounts to OAS and GIS recipients to assist as many seniors as possible in offsetting these

additional costs. The increase could be retroactive to March and last four months, much like other government economic response programs. This measure would have the advantage of delivering direct relief to those in need and would avoid unnecessary administrative delays and costs inherent in other delivery modes. Millions of Canadians seniors would receive much needed assistance right away.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to help us protect Canadian seniors. If there is anything I can do to support you through this process, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Sincerely,



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