

BE IT RESOLVED that:

The Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism carry out ongoing and multifaceted advocacy on behalf of its member organizations and older adults in Saskatchewan to demonstrate to the Government of Saskatchewan that the 2017 provincial budget has an adverse affect on the health and wellbeing of older adults.

Background Information:

Age-Friendly Communities encourages older adults to be involved in decision making in their communities, and encourages government leaders at all levels to take seriously the opinions of older adults.

Addressing the current provincial deficit is important. However, it is equally important to ensure that the needs of the people of Saskatchewan, particularly the most vulnerable, are being met. Our measure as a society comes from our ability to provide for a good quality of life for our citizens. Not all decisions can be made based on financial cost – the cost to our physical, mental and spiritual health must also be taken into account.

Funding for health care services

Good health is key to being able to live a full and active life. To maintain good health requires access to a variety of services as part of our health care system or at affordable costs.

Many older adults have fixed incomes not protected from inflation and cost increases. The recent provincial budget has made significant changes to funding that may affect the health and wellbeing of older adults and others.

Included in the changes are:

- Increased long term care charges
- Loss of funding support for chiropractor services
- Loss of support for hearing aid and podiatry services
- Introduction of PST on health insurance premiums

- Uncertainty about service levels with the merger of the health regions

Loss of STC Bus Service

Transportation is an essential service for people to allow them to access services, participate in the life of their communities, and stay connected with family and friends. Transportation needs change for many older adults. Driving may be restricted. Mobility issues may affect walking. Connecting to services requires affordable, appropriate transportation. With STC service no longer available, how will the provincial government address the need to provide the valuable services STC has offered? These include:

- Transportation to appointments e.g. medical
- Transportation to access services only available in another centre
- Accessible, affordable transportation, particularly for people in rural communities
- Freight service e.g. cancer medications to be administered locally for those too frail to travel
- Transportation of library books for the interlibrary loan system
- Providing the sole public transportation option in many areas

Reduction in Funding for Library Services

Older adults can become isolated due to ageism, chronic health problems, lack of transportation, low income, living at a distance from family, and critical life transitions. Libraries provide a valuable service that assists in reducing isolation of older adults. Library materials help older adults stay connected with current issues in the world, and provide a source of education and entertainment. Libraries are places where older adults can learn about and try out technology. Local libraries often provide programming that helps build stronger community connections for older adults and others.

Increases in PST

For older adults on low and/or fixed incomes, increases in the costs of goods and services can have a significant effect on their ability to access some of the things essential to their lives. It can also mean having to cut back on the sort of activities that help increase their quality of life.

Reduction of Hospital Chaplaincy Services

Overall health and wellbeing includes access to spiritual care. People in hospitals, and their family, are usually stressed and often facing a time of crisis in their lives. Some of these people are not regularly associated with any faith community, or may be a long way from their home faith community. Government supported chaplaincy services ensure that spiritual support is available to all people in hospital and their families. Government supported chaplaincy services also help to provide the listing of names of those in hospital who want spiritual care from local faith visitors.

Reduced Funding for Communities

Strong communities ensure a healthy population and high quality of life. The loss of SaskPower and SaskEnergy payments in lieu from local communities has left many communities struggling to address this reduction in resources. The shortfall in funding to communities is likely to result in:

- Reduced services
- Increased taxes