The Honourable Joanne Thompson
Minister of Seniors
Parliament of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Via email: Joanne.thompson@parl.gc.ca

December 20, 2024

Dear Minister Thompson:

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of Seniors. The International Longevity Centre Canada (ILC Canada) would like to convey our best wishes to you and wish to meet with you to discuss the human rights of older Canadians and other issues of mutual concern. ILC Canada is a human rights organization focussed on the needs of older persons. Our current focus is on the right to health/care, the right to housing and the right to income security. We are the leaders of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism (CCAA) a nation-wide social change movement to combat ageism against older people while protecting and strengthening their human rights. CCAA is comprised of Canada's largest national organizations on aging and is Chaired by Dr. Kiran Rabheru, ILC Canada Board Chair.

The COVID-19 pandemic and what has happened after, illustrates the disturbing escalation of human rights violations perpetrated on older persons globally. Residents in Canadian long term care homes (LTC) were denied the fundamental right to life and health and accounted for 81% of C-19 deaths early in the pandemic. Since than there has been little progress in long term care. In Ontario, the More Beds Better Care Act, ignores the autonomy of older citizens, by depriving them of their right to choose their place of residence and allowing for relocations away from families and vital community supports. Ageism lies at the core of the serious rights violations faced by older Canadians, leading to significant repercussions for their health and well-being. These violations also burden healthcare and public safety systems already under strain. Although many examples prove the persistence of age-based human rights abuses, it is impossible to list them all here. We call on Canada in its role as an international leader in human rights to address these rights violations and hope that you will support us in your new role as Minister for Seniors.

We must collectively intensify our efforts to not only protect the rights of older persons but also recognize that each one of us has a role to play in safeguarding them from harm. We are at an important crossroads, given the latest situation coming out of the United Nations (UN) which can have a critical impact on older persons in Canada and around the world. A draft resolution is being developed at the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC) by Member States who support a Convention on the rights of older persons, a document which would provide a legally binding

instrument to address the egregious human rights violations older persons experience. This resolution will likely be considered at the UN HRC meeting in March 2025. Canada has been instrumental in supporting moving the discussions on the human rights of older persons to the UN Human Rights Council and we would like to thank Ambassador Rae for his unwavering support for our work. At this point, however, Canada still does not support a United Nations convention on the rights of older persons, and we hope you will address this issue.

Political will and visionary leadership are crucial in bringing about significant social change, combating deeply entrenched ageism, and protecting and strengthening the human rights of older persons. Canada has a pivotal role to play in making this a reality. Under your leadership, as Minister of Seniors, we ask that you recognize older persons as a priority and endorse our call for a UN convention, because we strongly believe Canada can and must play a significant leadership role in this regard.

Please accept our sincere congratulations and know that ILC Canada and the CCAA stands ready to support you in your role, advocating for seniors' issues. We are confident, that together we can ensure older Canadians have a strong voice, feel safe and respected and can enjoy the quality of life they so richly deserve for generations to come.

With this spirit, we look forward to meeting you to further develop previously established collaborative opportunities with the Minister for Seniors.

Very Best

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