



AQDR

AQDR nationale

ASSOCIATION QUÉBÉCOISE DE DÉFENSE
DES DROITS DES PERSONNES RETRAITÉES
ET PRÉRETRAITÉES

**Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee
on the Status of Women, Ottawa
Chaired by Ms. Karen Vecchio**

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About AQDR

The Association québécoise de défense des droits des personnes retraitées et préretraitées (AQDR) is a non-profit organization that has been advocating for seniors for more than 35 years. With 25,000 members, the Association is well known in Quebec, thanks to the hard work of its 43 branches that are dedicated to this cause. The AQDR has amalgamated the requests of Quebec seniors and is passing them on to the appropriate authorities on their behalf.

Our vision

The AQDR has a dynamic vision for aging, one of fulfillment, where seniors can take control of their own lives, grow and engage with their community. It plays a leadership role in defending the rights of seniors, especially the most vulnerable.

Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women

As in many other societies, the percentage of seniors in Quebec and Canada is growing (as of July 1, 2017, in Quebec, there were 1,553,113 people aged 65 and over, with 54.9% women, or 849,491, and 48.2% men, or 703,621, according to the Institut de la statistique). This demographic shift will affect not only intergenerational matters, but also the living conditions and well-being of seniors. The AQDR was very pleased to learn that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is studying the challenges faced by senior women. We have provided a few short observations and our recommendations below.

General observations and recommendation

The concept of gender equality has evolved significantly in the last 50 years, and is taken for granted in Western societies, including Quebec. Significant strides have been made toward this state in a number of fields. However, as the *Government Strategy for Gender Equality: Toward 2021* states, “our goals have not yet been met, and progress seems to be losing steam in some areas. The Strategy therefore pays special attention to persistent inequalities, such as violence against women, gender stereotypes, low gender diversity in education and in the workplace, difficulties balancing family, work, and school, and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making.”

The AQDR agrees with both this statement, and the concept of “healthy aging.” This concept, adopted by the Government of Canada in 2001, was recommended as a model to the Government of Quebec in 2008 by a group of Quebec researchers. The definition of “health” used as a basis for the concept of “healthy aging” is taken from the World Health Organisation (1986). It states that health “is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

Recommendation

The AQDR recommends that the government and its departments and agencies apply the concept of Gender-Based Analysis (GBA). “GBA is an analytical process that promotes gender equality through the policies and actions of local, regional, and national decision-making bodies. Its purpose is to pre-emptively determine how men and women may be affected differently when a public project is implemented, by taking into account the different situations and needs of women and men. The analysis is carried out during project development, implementation, evaluation and follow-up. In some cases,

GBA will lead to different measures being offered to women and men in an effort to reduce inequalities. Its end goal is to attain substantive equality.”

General observations and recommendations

In our role representing seniors, we have made the following observations:

- Canada’s aging population is one of the most pressing strategic imperatives of our time, and it will have a significant impact on health care, social services and the economy.
- According to *Aide Abus Aînés*, more than 70% of alleged victims of intimidation, abuse and mistreatment are women.
- Senior women are poorer than men, although the gap narrows based on age. For those aged 55 to 64, women have 63% of disposable income that men do; for those aged 65 to 74, it is 65%, and for those aged 75 and over, it is 80%. This narrowing gap is because the average disposable income for men decreases over time. Having a lower income impedes access to some essential health services, such as paying for medication that is not covered, or dental care.
- Over the course of their lives, women and seniors who are women take on the caregiver role far more than men do; however, there is little financial recognition for retired seniors who are women.
- Community organizations that work with seniors, supporting and defending them, have insufficient budgets and are granted funding for too short a time to provide long-term, high-quality services.

That is why we advocate for and recommend the following:

1. To ensure that health services are sustainable

That the Government of Canada review the current formula for the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) to include a variable taking into account the aging population, which would increase the funding provided by the federal government. (The CHT was \$37 billion in 2017–2018, while total expenses were \$167 billion, and the current formula is based on a flat per capita allocation.)

2. To lessen the financial repercussions of a death and to support widows

That the government continue paying the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) benefits or the Death Benefit to the surviving spouse for three months. (The AQDR supports this proposal made by the FADOQ network).

3. To support senior caregivers

That the federal government increase all the amounts for the various tax credits for caregivers to include retired seniors looking after their sick relatives.

4. To address mistreatment and intimidation

That the federal government, together with the provinces, implement awareness programs for the general public, service companies and the banking industry to address the mistreatment and intimidation of seniors.

5. To help community advocacy organizations

That the government extend the New Horizons for Seniors Program, that it improve it by making it more flexible, and that it add a specific component for advocacy organizations.

6. To support healthy aging

That the government adopt, as part of its policies and programs, an approach that addresses ageism and values and recognizes the positive role that seniors have played in our society (e.g., providing a tax credit for sports and cultural activities, recognizing student status for seniors).

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