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
Centre Canada

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

Ambassador Marc-Andre Blanchard
Permanent Representative to Canada at the United Nations

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor
Health Minister
Dr. Dallas Seitz, MD, FRCPC  
President, CAGP

Dr. Frank Molnar  
President, Canadian Geriatrics Society

Dr. David Conn  
Co-Leader  
Canadian Coalition for Senior’s Mental Health

Claire Checkland  
Director - Canadian Coalition for Seniors’ Mental Health

Joanne Charlebois  
Chief Executive Officer, Speech-Language & Audiology Canada

Claire Betker  
President  
Canadian Nurses Association
Janice Christianson-Wood, MSW, RSW
Title/Organization: President, Canadian Association of Social Workers / Présidente, l’Association canadienne des travailleurs sociaux

François Couillard
Chief Executive Officer / Chef de la direction

Ondina Love, CAE
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Dental Hygienists Association

Jean-Guy Soulière
President / Président
National Association of Federal Retirees / Association nationale des retraités fédéraux

Sarah Bercier
Executive Director

Laura Tamblyn Watts
National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly
Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy
Founder Fountain of Health

Dr. Beverley Cassidy
Geriatric Psychiatrist
Seniors Mental Health
Dalhousie University Dept of Psychiatry

Jenny Neal and Janet Siddall
CO Chairs, Leadership Team
Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN)

Kelly Stone
President and CEO
Families Canada

Dr. Becky Temple, MD, CCFP, CCPE
President, CSPL
Medical Director Northeast, Northern Health
Medical Lead Privilege Dictionary Review, BCMQI
J. Van Aerde, MD, MA, PhD, FRCPC
Clinical Professor of Pediatrics - Universities of Alberta &
British Columbia, Canada
Associate Faculty - Leadership Studies - Royal Roads Univ, Victo-
ria, BC, Canada
Past-President - Canadian Society of Physician Leaders
Editor-in-Chief / Canadian Journal of Physician Leadership

Dr. Rollie Nichol, MD, MBA, CCFP, CCPE
Vice-President, CSPL
Associate Chief Medical Officer, Alberta Health Services

Dr. Shannon Fraser, MSc, FRCSC, FACS
Secretary / Treasurer, CSPL
Chief General Surgery
Jewish General Hospital

Linda Gobessi MD FRCPC
Medical Director
Geriatric Psychiatry Community Services of Ottawa Ottawa

Vickie Demers
Executive Director / Directrice générale
Services communautaires de géronto- psychiatrie d’ Ottawa
Geriatric Psychiatry Community Services of Ottawa
Ging-Yuek Robin Hsiung, MD MHSc FRCPC FACP FAAN
Associate Professor
Ralph Fisher and Alzheimer Society of BC Professor
Director of Clinical Research
Director of Fellowship in Behavioural Neurology
UBC Hospital Clinic for Alzheimer and Related Disorders
Division of Neurology, Department of Medicine
University of British Columbia

Adriana Shnall
Senior Social Worker
Baycrest Health Sciences

Harinder Sandhu, D.D.S., Ph.D
Professor and Past Director
Schulich Dentistry & Vice Dean, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Western University

Dr. Christopher Frank,
Chair of Geriatric Education and Recruitment Initiative

Jennie Wells, MD
Associate Professor, University of Western Ontario
Department of Medicine
Chair/Chief Division of Geriatric Medicine
Parkwood Institute
Laura Diachun, MD  
Program Director, Undergrad Geriatric Education  
University of Western Ontario  
Department of Medicine, Division of Geriatric Medicine  
Parkwood Institute

Sheri-Lynn Kane, MD  
Program Director Internal Medicine  
Dept of Medicine Education Office  
Victoria Hospital

Niamh O'Regan, MB ChB,  
Assistant Professor, University of Western Ontario  
Parkwood Institute

Michael Borrie, MB ChB, FRCPC  
Professor, University of Western Ontario  
Department of Medicine, Division of Geriatric Medicine  
Parkwood Institute

Jenny Thain, MRCP (Geriatrics)  
Assistant Professor, University of Western Ontario  
Department of Medicine, Division of Geriatric Medicine  
Victoria Hospital
Peter R. Butt MD CCFP FCFP  
Assoc. Professor, Department of Family Medicine,  
College of Medicine,  
University of Saskatchewan

Mamta Gautam, MD, MBA, FRCPC, CCPE  
Dept of Psychiatry, University of Ottawa  
Psychiatrist, Psychosocial Oncology Program,  
The Ottawa Hospital  
President and CEO, PEAK MD Inc.

Dr. Shabbir Amanullah  
Chair, ICPA

Arun V. Ravindran, MBBS, MSc, PhD, FRCPC, FRCpsych  
Professor and Director, Global Mental Health and the Office of Fellowship Training, Department of Psychiatry,  
Graduate Faculty, Department of Psychology and Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Toronto

Sarah Thompson, MD, FRCPC  
Geriatric Psychiatrist  
Seniors’ Mental Health Team  
Addictions and Mental Health Program

Louise Plouffe, Ph.D.  
Director of Research, ILC Canada (retired)
Kimberley Wilson, PhD, MSW
Assistant Professor, Adult Development & Aging, Department of Family Relations & Applied Nutrition, University of Guelph

Andrew R. Frank M.D. B.Sc.H. F.R.C.P.(C)
Cognitive and Behavioural Neurologist
Medical Director, Bruyère Memory Program
Bruyère Continuing Care
Ottawa, Canada

Diane Hawthorne
Family Physician
BSc, MD, CCFP, FCFP

Dr. Ken Le Clair
Prof Emeritus Queens University and. Lead Policy Physician
Consultant to Ontario. Seniors Behavioral Support Initiative
Queens University