

Human Rights Framework for Older Persons in Canada

1. Purpose and Guiding Principles

This framework seeks to protect, promote, and fulfill the rights of older persons in Canada, ensuring dignity, autonomy, and full participation in society. It is guided by the following principles:

- **Dignity and Respect** – Every older person has the right to be valued and treated with dignity, free from discrimination, exclusion, and ageism.
- **Equality and Non-Discrimination** – Age must never limit or be a barrier to rights, opportunities, services or protections.
- **Participation and Inclusion** – Older persons must have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, with capacity presumed unless proven otherwise.
- **Independence and Autonomy** – Support systems should empower rather than control, ensuring full agency.
- **Accountability** – Governments, institutions, and service providers must be held responsible for upholding these rights.

2. Core Rights

A. Civil and Political Rights

- Freedom from age-based discrimination in law, policy, and practice.
- Equal access to justice, legal remedies and protections under the law.
- Right to participate in economic, social, political, and public life.

B. Economic and Social Rights

- Adequate income security (including pensions, benefits, fair wages and income support for older workers), ensuring the ability to meet the cost of living.
- Fair employment opportunities and protections.
- Access and right to choose safe, affordable and appropriate housing suited to needs.
- Equal access to and right to choose care and healthcare, including geriatric and mental health services and long-term care services, with consideration of affordability.
- Access to affordable essential services, including home care, transportation, and digital access.

C. Cultural and Community Rights

- Right to participate in cultural, spiritual, and community life.
- Preservation and transmission of language, traditions, and heritage.

D. Protection from Mistreatment (Abuse and Neglect)

- Safeguards against physical, emotional, financial, systemic, institutional abuse and neglect.
- Accessible reporting and intervention mechanisms.

E. Emerging & Future Considerations

- Lifelong learning and digital inclusion.
- Ethical use of Artificial Intelligence and advanced technology.
- Access to palliative care and end of life care.
- Protection in situations of climate change/emergencies, conflicts and humanitarian disasters.

3. Implementation Strategies

- **Legislative Measures:** Work for the enactment or strengthening of age-specific, anti-discrimination protections and legal safeguards.
- **Policy Integration:** Work to embed older persons' rights into all federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal policy frameworks after a policy review, when required.
- **Education & Awareness:** Promote public educational campaigns to combat ageism and promote intergenerational solidarity.
- **Data & Monitoring:** Collect and analyze disaggregated data to identify disparities and track progress, while ensuring the protection and security of personal data.
- **Accessible Services:** Lobby to ensure services are physically, financially, linguistically and culturally accessible.
- **UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons:** contribute to and support the development and ratification by our country of the convention.
- **Work** to mainstream an age-friendly lens ensuring anti-ageism in policy, programming and legislative development (view all policy through an anti-ageism lens).

4. Accountability and Oversight

- Work for a dedicated federal **Minister Responsible for Seniors**.
- Lobby to establish a federal **Independent Commissioner for the Rights of Older Persons**, while supporting the development of senior advocates at the provincial level.
- Work to implement annual public reporting on progress and challenges.
- Work to ensure mechanisms for direct participation by older persons in oversight and policy review.

5. Alignment with International Standards

This framework aligns with the:

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (basis of international human rights law).
- **Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights of Older Persons**.
- **UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies** (Committees of Independent Experts).
- **UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC)** (made up of 47 Member States (MS)).
- **Universal Periodic Review** (mechanism of the UN HRC to peer review MS).
- **UN Principles for Older Persons** (Independence, Participation, Care, Self-fulfillment, Dignity).
- Ongoing work toward a **UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons**.

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Dignity



Equality



Inclusive
Participation



Autonomy



Accountability



Civil & Political Rights



Freedom from
age-based
discrimination



Access to justice,
legal protections
& remedies



Participation in
economic, political
and public life



Economic & Social Rights



Income security &
fair employment
opportunities



Right to choose &
access to affordable,
safe housing



Health &
care services



Cultural & Community Rights



Community
participation



Cultural
expression



Intergenerational
connection



Protection from Mistreatment (Abuse & Neglect)



Protection from all
forms of abuse



Accessible reporting, intervention
mechanisms & supports



Emerging Rights Considerations



Digital
inclusion



Artificial
Intelligence



Climate
Impacts



Lifelong
learning



Palliative and
End of Life Care



Implementation & Accountability



Legislation



Policy
integration



Data &
monitoring



Accessible
services



Public
education



Federal Minister
for Seniors



Independent
Commissioner



Support for a UN
Convention on the
Rights of Older Persons