



September 28, 2018

The Honourable Filomena Tassi
Minister of Seniors
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Sent by email: Filomena.Tassi@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Tassi,

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Seniors. We look forward to working with you and your staff to achieve your mandate of ensuring that programs and services are developed to provide Canadian seniors with a better quality of life.

Dietitians of Canada (DC) is a [professional association](#) representing over 5,000 members across Canada. We have a strong structure supporting membership engagement, with six regional offices across Canada facilitating FPT (federal/provincial/territorial) outreach, focusing on public affairs, professional development and education, and supporting our members to improve the health of Canadians. We aim to advance health through food and nutrition, and to provide leadership in shaping food and nutrition policy.

Dietitians are passionate about the power of food and its connection to health. Our influence runs deep; the diversity of our roles covers every area of food and nutrition across the country. Like all regulated health professionals, dietitians undergo comprehensive and rigorous training, both on the job and in universities. Dietitians' work is supported by evidence-based science and reviews of the scientific literature reveal that including a dietitian on the health team can lead to better health outcomes. We are committed to collaborating with patients, clients, communities and government leaders to achieve the shared goals of better eating and improved health.

Of the top priorities articulated by Prime Minister Trudeau for your portfolio, we offer our expertise in discussing policy options particularly in the areas of healthy aging and food security.

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Investments in community-based primary health care, home care, and long-term care can benefit from appropriate use of dietitian services. The Nutrition Care in Canadian Hospitals (NCCH) study reported that 45% of Canadians (older adults) are admitted to hospitals malnourished. Malnutrition has been shown to extend hospital stays by 2 to 3 days, costing the Canadian health system over \$2 billion annually. Dietitians play a critical and unique role in interprofessional health teams in preventing, identifying, and treating malnutrition through coordinated systems that can reduce this cost and have further benefits to health and quality of life. Many opportunities exist to promote healthy aging through food and nutrition.

Household food insecurity, the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints, is a serious public health issue in Canada. One in eight Canadian households do not have enough money to buy safe and nutritious food. For individuals living in food insecure households, there is greater likelihood of developing one or more chronic physical and/or mental health conditions and becoming a 'high cost user' of health care services. We believe that support programs to address seniors' poverty must include monitoring of food insecurity to measure impact, and policies to support access to healthy foods.

We recognize the value of improved services to coordinate/simplify access to pension benefits and are very pleased that your work, together with that of Minister Duclos, is directed toward ensuring a minimum income for seniors and reducing poverty among Canada's seniors. As health professionals, we know that these actions will improve quality of life and ultimately will contribute to savings in health care services.

We look forward to meeting with you and your staff to discuss how our association and dietitian members can support our mutual goals in improving seniors' health and quality of life.

Sincerely,



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