

APR 12 2017

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

CLERK OF THE SENATE

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GREFFIER DU SENAT

Mr. Charles Robert
Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments
The Senate
Centre Block, Room 185-S
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4

Dear Mr. Robert:

Please find enclosed for tabling in the Senate, pursuant to rule 12-24(3), two copies, in both official languages, of the Government Response to the Sixth Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, entitled *Dementia in Canada: A National Strategy for Dementia-friendly Communities* which was tabled on November 15, 2016.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Philpott".

The Honourable Jane Philpott, P.C., M.P.

Enclosures

Canada

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

Mr. Kelvin K. Ogilvie
Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A4

Dear Mr. Ogilvie,

Pursuant to Rule 12-24 of the Senate of Canada, I am pleased to respond, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to the Sixth Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (Committee), entitled *Dementia in Canada: A National Strategy for Dementia-friendly Communities* (Report), which was tabled in the Senate on November 15, 2016.

Our Government commends the members of the Committee and the many witnesses who have appeared before it. The valuable perspectives expressed in this Report, many of which were gained through lived experience, clearly demonstrate the commitment to addressing dementia and helping to support the growing number of Canadians affected.

Like this Report, Private Member's Bill C-233, *An Act respecting a national strategy for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias*, also proposes the development of a national dementia strategy by working in cooperation with the Provinces and Territories (P/Ts).

Our Government sees the value of a strategy that facilitates collaboration, accelerates the use of research and evidence, and promotes best practices to ensure maximum benefit for those living with dementia, their families and caregivers. We also know that complex health challenges cannot be addressed in isolation from broader horizontal policy solutions. On December 19th, 2016, our Government offered federal funding to P/Ts of \$11 billion over ten years for home care and mental health services, as well as \$544 million over five years for federal and pan-Canadian health organizations to support work on health innovation and prescription drugs.

The Government's response is grouped into six themes, aligned with the committee's recommendations: international leadership on dementia; federal research, data and innovation; healthy aging; living with dementia; support for family and friend caregivers; and home care services, housing, and health care delivery.

Theme 1: International Leadership on Dementia

Canada's international leadership on dementia research is well illustrated in the Report.

The 2013 G8 Dementia Summit resulted in a global commitment to increase the priority placed on dementia and capitalize on each country's strengths to accelerate progress. As a result,

Canada

Canada and France joined efforts to strengthen partnerships among academia and the private sector so that scientific discoveries can be more quickly translated into solutions.

Our Government recognizes the importance of research to understand the causes of dementia, and the most effective ways to prevent, identify, treat, and ultimately find a cure. Through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's (CIHR) Dementia Research Strategy (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/43629.html>), Canada is contributing to the global pursuit to find a cure or disease-modifying treatment for dementia by 2025.

Canada's international leadership in promoting healthy aging includes our role, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, in establishing the Age-Friendly Communities Initiative (AFC). AFCs advance policies, programs, services and environments that make active and healthy aging a priority. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has played a leadership role in this global movement since its inception in 2005. Today, 33 countries have adopted the age-friendly priorities.

In addition to supporting healthy aging through the AFC initiative, the Government of Canada is working in collaboration with the Alzheimer Society of Canada (ASC) to implement Dementia Friends Canada. Dementia Friends represents a global movement to support those living with dementia. Since its inception, the Japanese and UK initiatives have been replicated in a number of countries, including Australia, India, Indonesia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Scotland and Sri Lanka.

Theme 2: Dementia Research, Data and Innovation

As underscored in the Report, Canadians should be proud of our world-class dementia research. Canada's research leadership under CIHR has resulted in investments of \$193 million over the past five years in dementia research, with \$39.8 million in 2015-16 alone. CIHR's Dementia Research Strategy supports research on the latest preventative, diagnostic and treatment approaches to Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. The Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration and Aging (CCNA) announced, on September 21, 2016, the largest Canadian study on dementia, which funds 20 research teams in three main areas: Primary Prevention, Secondary

Prevention and Quality of Life. Internationally, CIHR's Dementia Research Strategy includes long-standing participation in a European initiative, the Joint Programme on Neurodegenerative Disease Research (JPND). The JPND initiative is a collaboration of 30 countries, with each country providing funding to the program to support the participation of researchers from their respective countries in multinational research teams. To date, CIHR has committed \$41.5 million in the Dementia Research Strategy, which has been matched by domestic and international partner contributions of \$30.5 million, for a total \$72 million investment.

Through the Canada Brain Research Fund (<http://www.braincanada.ca/>), administered by the Brain Canada Foundation, federal funds are matched with private and charitable donations to support brain research. Since 2013, this fund has supported 19 research projects totaling over \$30 million in funding for Alzheimer's disease and dementia research.

Our Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation regarding the need for robust, timely and accessible dementia surveillance data. As a result of the \$15 million National Population Health Study on Neurological Conditions established in 2014, PHAC is now working with P/Ts to establish ongoing surveillance of dementia through the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System. This surveillance system uses linked health system administrative data sources from every province and territory to estimate the incidence and prevalence of dementia, as well as use of health services and health outcomes. Annual reporting is scheduled to begin in 2017-18.

New directions for dementia research continue to emerge globally. Among these is the recognition of the role "big data" can play in fast tracking efforts in all areas of dementia research and care. By sharing and linking data, both at the national and international levels, researchers can identify trends and patterns that provide important insights into the complex set of factors that lead to dementia and affect its progression.

To accelerate the translation of research into social and technological innovations for older individuals living with dementia, as well as their caregivers, the Government of Canada is supporting the establishment of the Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation (CC-ABHI) (<http://www.ccabhi.com/>) in collaboration with Baycrest Health Sciences in Toronto. CC-ABHI serves as a national hub to accelerate the development, validation, commercialization, dissemination and adoption of innovative products, services and best practices to support brain health and aging. A federal investment of \$42 million over five years (along with over 40 other partners for a total investment of \$123.5 million) is supporting CC-ABHI's vision of a world in which people can age in the setting of their choice, maintaining their cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being and independence as long as possible. Innovative solutions to address brain health and aging need to include medical devices, therapeutic approaches, emerging technologies, and digital health solutions, healthcare delivery practices, and practitioner and caregiver training and support that focus on wellness.

Theme 3: Healthy Aging

Our Government understands the link between healthy living and healthy aging. Many older Canadians are living with chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and respiratory disease. The factors that increase the risk of developing these illnesses are also associated with the risk of developing some forms of dementia. In particular, cardiovascular disease and vascular dementia share risk factors (e.g., unhealthy eating, physical inactivity and smoking), and Canadians need more information on how healthy living may reduce dementia risk.

Our Government is implementing the Healthy Canada Strategy, an ambitious agenda to support healthy eating, healthy living and healthy minds, as part of my vision for a healthy Canada, announced on October 24, 2016.

As noted in the Report, PHAC plays a public health role in helping reduce the risk factors for dementia. As such, PHAC's Multi-sectoral Partnership Approach to Promote Healthy Living and Prevent Chronic Disease has invested \$49 million and leveraged an additional \$43 million from

partners, since the launch of this program, to promote healthy eating, physical activity and wellness, and to address the common risk factors that underlie major chronic diseases. Federal investments in promising primary prevention interventions are supporting healthier lifestyles and encouraging the collaboration of all sectors of society in making good health a priority. It is by continuing to focus efforts on healthy living that our Government will help change the societal norms that have become entrenched over many years and that put the health of Canadians at risk.

Being physically active, including participating in sports, is an integral part of living healthy lives. PHAC partners with many diverse organizations that share a common goal of promoting physical activity and active living. This includes collaboration with the P/Ts, as well as with a broad range of organizations, including Canadian Tire JumpStart Charities, Right to Play, ParticipACTION, and Special Olympics Canada.

Health Canada's education products and ongoing communications continue to promote simplified healthy eating messages that centre on encouraging Canadians to eat more vegetables and fruit, and to build healthy meals. Furthermore, Health Canada will explore with the provinces and territories the best approach to implement the provision of nutrition information in restaurants and food service establishments. Additionally, the Government will continue to support and build upon efforts to sustain awareness of healthy and active living by disseminating health promotion information throughout the year. This includes harnessing technology, as well as leveraging the expertise and reach of public and private sector partners within and outside of the health sector.

PHAC's role in advancing the AFC initiative, described under Theme 1, is an important part of our domestic healthy aging agenda. PHAC is working with P/Ts to help support built and social environments that enable older people to enjoy good health, participate actively in their communities, and live in security. Over 1000 communities across the country are part of the AFC initiative. In order to continue to grow the momentum, PHAC is working with the P/Ts to help communities implement and evaluate their AFC initiatives. In fact, PHAC released the Age-Friendly Communities Evaluation Guide (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/indicators-indicateurs-v2-eng.pdf>) in December 2015 to support systematic evaluation and the use of indicators to measure results.

Theme 4: Living with Dementia

Our current context, where treatments for neurodegenerative diseases are limited and no new drug treatments for Alzheimer's disease or other dementias have been approved in the past five years, underscores the importance of putting an emphasis on helping people live well with dementia. As cognitive function declines, people often become increasingly isolated from their communities. The stigma that occurs from a lack of understanding of dementia is a barrier to quality of life, not only for those living with dementia, but also for families and informal caregivers.

The Report points to the importance of "dementia-friendly environments", and to stigma reduction as a pre-requisite to achieve these. The Dementia Friends Canada program

(www.dementiafriends.ca) is creating a large online community of Canadians who are engaged in public awareness and are committed to supporting those living with dementia to help them stay connected to their communities. Our Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation on the importance of public awareness, and we will continue to build the Dementia Friends Canada program as the basis for education, information and public engagement.

Through our Government's recognition of national and international awareness days, we will promote improved understanding and awareness, and support increased engagement across the country through social media and ministerial messages. In 2016, in recognition of Alzheimer's Awareness Month, my colleague, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, recognized the significant role that family and friends play every day in providing care and support for those living with dementia. The Minister invited Canadians to meet dedicated caregivers through a video series available at Canada.ca.

Theme 5: Support for families and caregivers

The Government of Canada recognizes the sacrifices that many Canadians make to care for their children, spouses, parents and other family members with serious health conditions or disabilities, and that these individuals often incur out-of-pocket expenses as a result of their care responsibilities. Our Government agrees with the Committee that these caregivers need support to maintain good physical, emotional, social and financial health. For this reason, the Government provides a number of non-refundable tax credits for caregivers including the Family Caregiver Credit, the Caregiver Credit and the Infirm Dependent Credit. The federal government also contributes indirectly through the Canada Social Transfer to P/Ts.

We recognize the challenges faced by Canadians who balance work and caregiving. Through a consultative process, we heard directly from Canadians and stakeholders and are taking steps to enhance support. We have extended Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefits to 26 weeks. Additionally, in Budget 2016, the Government committed to further improving Employment Insurance by making the compassionate care benefit more flexible and more inclusive for those who provide care for seriously ill family members. Recognizing the struggle many Canadian caregivers face when balancing their work and care responsibilities, the Government plans to introduce such changes to the federal Labor Code (family responsibility/care-related leave; right to request flexible work arrangements) to encourage employers to provide more support and flexibility.

Consistent with the Committee's recommendation, our Government is also undertaking work to support uptake of employer best practices, including, knowledge events (webinars and conference presentations) to share the findings and best practices outlined in the report *When Work and Caregiving Collide*, and we are working with the Canadian Standards Association to develop a caregiver-friendly workplace standard. Additionally, the Canada.ca website provides a central location for a number of information resources recently released for employers, employed caregivers and future caregivers. These brochures, fact sheets and videos focus on balancing work and care, as well as caregiver readiness.

Additionally, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), funded by the federal government, has released two sets of guidelines on mental health services provided to older adults. "Guidelines for Comprehensive Mental Health Services for Older Adults in Canada" includes a chapter on preventing dementia, and "National Guidelines for a Comprehensive Service System to Support family Caregivers of Adults with Mental Health Problems and Illnesses" provides recommendations on how to improve family caregiver support along the mental health continuum.

Theme 6: Home-care services, housing, and health care delivery

Health care is a shared responsibility between the Government of Canada and P/Ts. While the federal government's role is to strengthen the publicly funded universal health care system and to support P/Ts in their provision of that care, the responsibility for matters related to the administration and delivery of these services, including the use of technologies, licencing, education, planning and management of the health workforce, and the implementation of health care models, falls within P/T jurisdiction.

We understand that Canadians expect governments to make sound investments in our health care system that will achieve measurable, high quality, and cost-effective outcomes. This is why, on December 19, 2016, the Government of Canada offered federal funding to P/Ts of \$11 billion over ten years for home care and mental health services, as well as \$544 million over five years for federal and pan-Canadian health organizations to support work on health innovation and prescription drugs. These investments would address specific gaps in our health care system, such as improving home care, access to mental health care, expanding the use of electronic health records, and lowering the cost of prescription drugs. A number of P/Ts have accepted the federal proposal and have agreed to use new targeted federal funding over ten years for home care and mental health. The federal government remains open to negotiating agreements with the remaining P/Ts. These new federal investments could complement efforts to help Canadians living with dementia and their families.

These targeted investments are in addition to the substantial, predictable funding the federal government provides to P/Ts for health care through the Canada Health Transfer (CHT). In 2016-17, the federal government is providing \$36.1 billion in cash support through the CHT. This amount will continue to increase every year, in-line with the rate of gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

The Government also takes part in collaborative action on health human resources through the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Committee on Health Workforce and, within this committee structure, there are three task forces addressing issues relevant to dementia and senior's care, including the Personal Support Workers Working Group, the Principal Nursing Advisor's Task Force and the Physician Planning Resource Task Force.

Implementation of health information and communication technologies has been a shared F/P/T priority since 2001. Through existing investments in Canada Health Infoway, our government is taking concrete steps to implement a national e-prescribing system for Canada and to increase the adoption of electronic health records (EHR). To date, our government has invested \$2.15

billion in Infoway, and the most recent 2016 Budget allocation provided Infoway with \$50 million over two years for e-prescribing and telehome care. As of March 31, 2016, EHR data were available for 93.8% of Canadians.

Our government recognizes the potential of digital health to support better care and better information for patients, and has committed to new investments in digital health as part of the \$544 million over five years for health innovation included as part of investments related to the health accord.

The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation to enhance high-speed broadband coverage throughout Canada to improve access to telehealth or mobile health technologies in rural and remote communities. Budget 2016 announced up to \$500 million over five years for a new program to extend and enhance broadband service in rural and remote communities. The new Connect to Innovate program was launched by the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, in December 2016, and through this program, our government will partner with private sector service providers and other levels of government to implement projects that will bring transformative connectivity improvements to underserved communities across the country.

Through the Investment in Affordable Housing, our Government is helping households in need, including seniors, access affordable housing and, as announced in Budget 2016, will invest \$200.7 million over two years. We expect this investment to improve the housing conditions for more than 5,000 low-income senior households. Additionally, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, our Government provides housing market information to understand the seniors housing market, and will also continue to conduct research on accessible, adaptable and inclusive housing options for seniors, including housing for those living with dementia (e.g., renovations, adaptations, design).

As noted by the Prime Minister in my mandate letter, no relationship is more important to our country than the one with Indigenous Peoples. Through the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Program (FNIHCC), our government provides a continuum of basic home care services that enable First Nations and Inuit of all ages, including the elderly and those with disabilities or chronic or acute illness, to receive the care they need in their homes and communities. The range of services the FNIHCC offers includes client assessment, case management, nursing, personal care, and in-home respite. The FNIHCC program also provides in-home acute care service, particularly for care after a discharge from the hospital.

Conclusion

Dementia is a topic close to the hearts of Canadians. Federal, provincial and territorial governments, working with many partners, continue to take important steps to find ways to improve the quality of life of those affected and to contribute to the global search for a cure or disease-modifying therapy. Together, these initiatives have set out a path forward that builds on existing investments, engages Canadians, and takes a coordinated, collaborative approach to addressing the challenges that dementia presents.

We recognize the leadership role governments play in supporting the health of Canadians and believe that we are taking positive steps, including our support for Bill C-233, introduced by my colleague, the Honourable Rob Nicholson, to establish a national dementia strategy.

The Government thanks the Senate Committee for their work on this significant health, societal and economic issue. We trust that this response demonstrates the Government's ongoing commitment to build stronger communities of support for individuals living with dementia across our country.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Philpott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

The Honourable Jane Philpott, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health