



Canada's seniors need improved access to community-based speech-language pathology and audiology services

THE ISSUE

Canada desperately needs to improve its entire approach to seniors health care. Our current health care system is ill-equipped to address the communication health needs of the fastest growing segment of our population: seniors. Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) continues to call on the federal government to prioritize seniors' health by expanding the health system to include access to publicly funded community-based speech-language pathology and audiology services.

THE BACKGROUND

There is a high incidence of communication, hearing, balance and swallowing disorders (dysphagia) among the elderly. With aging also comes a higher prevalence of stroke and chronic, degenerative conditions such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The need for speech-language pathology and audiology services will only increase as our country's aging population continues to grow.

Canada's demographics today are very different from when universal Medicare was introduced in the 1960s.¹ It is time for Canada to modernize its publicly funded health care system to proactively address the needs of seniors. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists have expertise in addressing the functional, emotional and social consequences of many chronic health conditions related to aging. It is important that communication health professionals contribute to the development of a new health care paradigm in Canada, one that is focused on better addressing the needs of seniors.

THE ASK

That the federal government expands Canada's publically funded health care system to include access to community-based speech-language pathology and audiology services.

While providing health care is primarily the responsibility of the provinces and territories, the federal government shares responsibility for funding the system.² Speech-Language & Audiology Canada is therefore calling on the federal government to take a leadership role in strengthening and expanding the health care system to ensure that seniors have access to timely and affordable speech-language pathology and audiology services.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES:

I am concerned about seniors in Canada...

- 1** If elected to form government, what action would your party take to ensure that seniors have access to high quality, publicly funded speech-language pathology and audiology services?
- 2** Do you support updating the Canada Health Act to encourage provinces and territories to expand community-based health care, including access to speech-language pathology and audiology services?