



Pre-budget consultation (verbal) presenter #41, January 9, 2016

Thank you MPP Baker for this opportunity to present a seniors' community perspective. My name is Elizabeth Macnab. I am the Executive Director at Ontario Society of Senior Citizens Organizations (OSSCO).

OSSCO is an umbrella group of community minded organizations that help improve the quality of life for Ontario's seniors, a growing demographic.

In our written submission, we focus on 6 areas. Today we highlight several.

Twenty to thirty years ago, Ontarians were good savers. Some now collect a pension. Today's rising utility costs mean that these retirees are dipping more into their retirement savings. Facing hydro bills of \$1200 a month or more will quickly deplete these savings. When past governments encouraged people in rural and northern Ontario to build homes heated by Hydro, Ontarians did so. It was impossible for these individuals to anticipate and plan for today's new hydro realities or the recent cap and trade energy tax.

Seniors who live in rural or northern Ontario have to drive. There is no adequate if any public transportation in or between communities. Seniors drive to purchase groceries, for dentist or doctor visits. They drive 4 – 6 hours for cancer treatments. The new cap and trade tax negatively affects everything regardless of where you live...from the cost of houses, transportation, manufacturing of goods and products, delivery of services, cost of food (farm to table) and many others.

How does OSSCO help 40% of our members who live well below the poverty level, some closer to \$14,000 a year? The 82 year old senior living on a rural route uses his truck to plow out his driveway and another for going to church. Rising hydro means the 84 year old in Kenora makes soup from fish bones which they have asked to get for free, as a replacement for the calcium



Ontario Society of Senior Citizens Organizations
La Société des Organisations des Citoyens Aînés de l'Ontario

tablets they cannot afford. What about the 88 year old single female in subsidized housing in Toronto? Will they decide to give up their daily visit to the library or their monthly free lunch and learn at the local synagogue because cap and trade tax eats into their budget? Will more seniors become lonely, withdrawn, isolated and malnourished? What stories will you hear?

We ask the Minister to reconsider how implementing of this energy tax and utility costs so that seniors will not have to make hard decisions between have and have not, or risk becoming homeless or enter into a state of ill health. A lot of seniors are 1 light bulb away from a dangerous fall.

With a proposed CCAC and LHIN merger, 1,000 agreements will continue and no 2 are alike. We believe that efficiencies can be found through government's operational reviews and applying a standardization of an acceptable maximum cost for services in these contracts.

Our feedback from groups to the Patients First Proposal concluded that the CCAC/LHIN merger did not result in any savings to the government and no new benefits to the user. The costs of amalgamation, relocation, systems changes, etc. were not disclosed. Our groups cautioned that this merger could potentially create precarious employment, continued outsourcing of services to the private sector and negatively impacts on the province's future tax base.

In conclusion, we hope our feedback – written and verbal – of what is important to Ontarians 55+ provides insight on how to address these. OSSCO values its collaborative relationship with the Government in meeting the needs of seniors who are most vulnerable to the impact of future policies and fiscal changes. We thank you for this opportunity.