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## COVID-19 Highlights Need for National Seniors Strategy

Pandemic has severely affected older Canadians, yet there remains no plan in place for coordinated national action

**TORONTO** – Today, the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) at Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management released its *National Seniors Strategy* (NSS), an evidenced based blueprint for federal leadership and policy recommendations for coordinated action to address the needs of an ageing population, in light of the effects of COVID-19 on the older population.

"Older Canadians were not spared the effects of COVID-19, in fact Canada's older population fared notably worse," said Dr. Samir Sinha, director of health policy research at the NIA. "Over 80% of all COVID-19 deaths in Canada occurred amongst older Canadians in nursing and retirement home settings, compared to an OECD average of 42%, and despite Canada having a total COVID-19 mortality rate comparatively lower than other OECD countries."

The issues facing older Canadians are deep rooted and were here long before COVID-19. The NSS builds on the previous strategy released in 2015, and the collaborative expert work of many. It identifies 14 key policy challenges that Canada needs to confront in order to deliver cost-effective, high quality care, financial security, and social well-being to older adults. These policy challenges fall under four pillars:

1. Independent, productive & engaged citizens
2. Healthy active lives
3. Care closer to home
4. Support for caregivers.

The strategy examines the sustainability and ability of health care systems, social services, and the retirement income to meet the needs of Canadians as they age. It also makes evidence-informed policy recommendations for each key challenge and identifies potential enablers to improve the system of care for older Canadians.

"Meeting the growing and evolving needs of Canada's ageing population will require concerted coordination and effort between municipal, provincial and territorial governments," said Michael Nicin, executive director of the NIA. "The NIA believes Canada's federal government can enable the meaningful changes required to meet the growing needs of the ageing population through the creation of a National Seniors Strategy."

The National Seniors Strategy can be accessed at: <http://nationalseniorsstrategy.ca/>

*The National Institute on Ageing is a Ryerson University think tank focused on the realities of Canada's ageing population.*

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