

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Take time to mark Seniors' Month

June is Seniors' Month.

It's an excellent opportunity for all of us to recognize and celebrate the countless contributions Canadian seniors have made and continue to make to our communities and country. Their hard work and immense efforts have shaped the great country Canada into what it is today. We can learn much from their wealth of experience and knowledge. We owe them our respect and support for their contributions. This month, let's take the time to thank Canada's seniors.

Canada's seniors now outnumber children for the first time, according to the 2016 census performed by Statistics Canada that was released in early May. Currently in Canada, there are 5.9 million Canadian seniors (aged 65 and older) versus 5.8 million Canadians aged 14 years and younger. These numbers will, of course, have an impact on everything from pensions to health care and housing. I'm proud of our previous Conservative government's track record for delivering results to Canadian seniors to meet their needs and priorities. After taking office in 2006, our previous government delivered \$2.8 billion in annual tax relief to seniors and pensioners; Canada's low-income rate for seniors fell from 21.4 per cent in 1980 to 5.2 per cent in 2011 – one of the lowest rates in the industrial world; Budget 2011 introduced the largest Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) increase in more than 25 years, investing more than \$300 million per year to further improve the financial security and well-being of more than 680,000 seniors across Canada; and implemented pension income-splitting for pensioners, allowing seniors and pensioners to allocate up to one-half of eligible pension income to their spouse or common-law partner for added tax relief.

In terms of seniors initiatives, our previous Conservative government increased funding for the New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) from \$45 million to \$50 million annually under Economic Action Plan 2014; this came in addition to prior enhancements in 2010 and 2011. We were also the government that introduced and passed the Protecting Canada's Seniors Act to help better protect seniors and victims of elder abuse.

Unfortunately, the current Liberal government's record on delivering results for seniors hasn't been nearly as strong. Canada's seniors want and deserve a voice in their government. Presently, the Trudeau government has a Minister for Youth, Families, and Social Development, but not for Seniors, despite this segment of the population being the fastest growing demographic in Canada. The need for a Minister for Seniors is considerable, especially given the recent 2016 census data. Furthermore, Canadian seniors are calling upon the government to develop a comprehensive National Seniors Strategy to meet their needs and address their issues. Developing such a strategy begins by appointing a Minister for Seniors.

During this month, I encourage everyone to take the time to thank the seniors in our lives for the role they've played and continue to play in shaping our great country. We can also show our deep appreciation for their immense contributions to Canada by encouraging the current Liberal government to finally take action to appoint a Minister for Seniors and develop a National Seniors Strategy. Canadian seniors not only deserve our respect, but also representation in their government.

