



Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists' (CAOT) 2015 Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

Executive Summary

“Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training” is the focus of CAOT’s submission. CAOT would like to target the “senior adult” population cohort -- a growing segment of Canada’s population and the health care professionals who serve them. The document will provide an overview of the Association and the profession, followed by 3 true and tried project recommendations for budget 2015. The objective of the first project is the safety and security of senior Canadian drivers, so that they can be: healthy, well, engaged and thrive in their daily lives while contributing to their families, communities and Canadian society. The purpose of the second and third project is to provide training or build capacity of health care professionals including occupational therapists, so that they can better support “senior adults” encountering abuse and provide prevention, intervention and post intervention supports to “senior adults” who might be contemplating suicide. All three projects which entail public private partnership arrangements are intended to promote the health and well-being of “seniors”, who are vulnerable Canadians, in a fiscally prudent manner, as the total cost of all three projects would amount to only \$300,000 per year.

The Association and the Profession

CAOT serves approximately 15,000 registered occupational therapists in Canada, who are health care professionals, regulated by provincial regulatory bodies, with post graduate degrees and areas of specialization. Occupational therapy is about enabling people to: optimize and unleash their potential and thrive in “all spheres of life”; navigate their environment, be engaged not only in paid employment, but in day to day living such as banking or grocery shopping, but also in the pursuit of leisure time activities such as golfing or sailing. Why? Because occupations describe who we are and how we feel about ourselves.

Occupational Therapy and the Return on Investment (ROI)

There is a high ROI of engaging occupational therapists (OTs) as they work in a range of settings such as homes, schools, work places, community health centers, long term care facilities as well as hospitals and with various population cohorts, age groups, with individuals, families and communities. OTs engage in prevention interventions, provide innovative solutions to problems as part of health care teams, outside the traditional model of health care which requires patients/clients to visit hospitals and/or emergency services which is not effective or efficient use of tax dollars. Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Geriatrics, Mount Sinai and the University Health Network Hospitals and the Provincial Lead, Ontario Seniors Strategy states that a one day stay in hospital costs \$1000, one day at a Long Term Care facility costs \$130 and one day of supportive housing or home and community care costs \$55, so having OTs working in homes for e.g. is effective and efficient. Studies have demonstrated that the ROI of engaging OTs is impressive. For example, housing adaptations from OT interventions reduced the need for daily visits by home care services and OT participation in primary care teams accrues returns through hospital avoidance and reduction in hospital stay.



There is high demand for OTs. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, OTs enjoy a 96% employment rate in Canada. According to the 2013 National Physician Survey of some 60,000 practicing physicians, undertaken by the College of Family Physicians, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Canadian Medical Association over 70% of physicians were unhappy about difficulties in securing appointments for patients with publicly funded OTs. Against this background CAOT would like to propose the continuation and expansion of three practical, tried and tested (through assessment of pilots) projects pertaining to senior adults in Canada, that would require small investments but would accrue substantial returns.

Rationale for the Projects -- Canada's Demographic Challenge

Canada's 2011 Census shows that seniors accounted for 14.8% of population, up from 13.7% in 2006. From 2011 to 2031, Canada's 'baby boom' generation will turn 65 and the proportion of seniors will grow at a higher rate.

According to the latest available Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) data published in 2013, seniors aged 65 and older, who comprised approximately 15% of the total population in 2011, accounted for 45% of all health care spending during that year.

CAOT Project Proposals

Project 1

CarFit Events

What is CarFit? CarFit is a community based educational program designed to promote optimal driver-vehicle alignment or fit -- usually determined through events hosted in towns and cities by the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) and CAOT. To date CAOT and CAA hosted 3 events in Fredericton, Kingston and Toronto. These events are generally attended by some 60 "senior adults" along with their families, health care providers such as occupational therapists, rehabilitation specialists as well as driving instructors.

CarFit provides older adults with the tools to understand and apply the safety features of their car. A 12-point checklist assists with: the assessment of the correct position of the driver's seat; drivers' ability to reach pedals; proper adjustment of mirrors etc. Occupational therapists are on hand to play an advisory/consultative role and teach drivers how to maintain and improve aspects related to their driving health. Occupational therapists also provide information to participants addressing individual needs, including information about local community resources on issues such as exercise or nutrition to keep them safe on the road.

Rationale for CarFit

Driving today is more difficult than ever because of increased traffic congestion, longer commute distances, new technology and faster speeds. Older drivers can take important measures to mitigate the stress associated with driving.

CarFit would directly benefit the current complement of 3.4 million drivers aged 65 and over (and their families) in all the provinces and territories across Canada. It would improve the



general well-being of older adults who often view their ability to drive as a measure of independence and quality of life.

According to Transport Canada, there are approximately 3.4 million drivers aged 65 and over involved in some 125,000 annual fatalities due to physical and/or cognitive infirmities. The CarFit events would contribute to the prevention of injuries, enhance the safety, security and mobility of older drivers and contribute to the safety of all road users.

Evaluation of CarFit

Feed-back from the 3 events hosted by CAOT and CAA was positive and garnered considerable public and media interest. Evaluation of CarFit events in the United States revealed that 95% felt that the events were somewhat or very useful. 74% discussed the program with others and 96% were somewhat or very likely to recommend CarFit to others. The results suggest that an interactive community education program such as CarFit can change the safety behaviors of older drivers.

Source of Funding for CarFit Events

CarFit events could be co-sponsored through public private sector partnerships. CAOT recommends that an additional stream of funding expressly for “older driver safety initiatives” be added to Employment and Social Development Canada’s New Horizons Program and that \$100,000 be allocated (and ear marked) on an annual basis for CAOT to roll out 30 “CarFit” events across Canada. The cost per event is approximately \$5,000. CAOT’s share of the costs would be \$50,000, as the total annual costs would amount to \$150,000.

Project 2

Elder Abuse Prevention Workshops

Elder Abuse – Facts

- Seniors over 85 years of age are the fastest growing age group in Canada. There are currently 645,000 seniors over 85 in Canada, and that is projected to reach 1.28 million by 2031. That will be a 98% increase over the next 20 years (Statistics Canada, 2010).
- According to Statistics Canada, in 2009, more than 154,000 or 2% of all Canadians aged 55 and older living in the 10 provinces reported having been the victim of a violent crime. Overall, older Canadians reported experiencing close to 241,000 incidents of violence in 2009.
- Based on available Canadian data, it is estimated that between 4% and 10% of older adults in Canada experience some type of abuse (National Seniors Council, 2007).
- Evidence is accumulating that elder abuse (physical, psychological, financial) is an important public health and societal problem (World Health Organization 2002).
- According to the November 2013 issue of the Canadian Family Physician, Statistics Canada did a telephone survey of 5000 people on the topic of geriatric abuse and neglect. The results were rather interesting, as 96% of participants thought that abuse and neglect were often hidden, and 22% believed they knew abused seniors. Sadly,



90% thought that abuse and neglect worsened with age and that women were more likely to be victims.

Elder Abuse Prevention “Train the Trainer” Workshops

The workshops originally developed for occupational therapists were expanded to include other health care professionals such as nurses, social workers, physio therapists to enable them to prevent, detect and intervene in situations of elder abuse. During the English and French training sessions, participants learn about indicators of elder abuse, prevention, assessment, intervention protocols, legislation and available resources.

Workshops to Date

CAOT trained 75 health care professionals at 3 sessions in 3 locations in Canada in 2013.

Assessment of Workshops

The workshops have been well received by participants because they: included a range of health care professionals (nurses, rehabilitation specialists, physio and occupational therapists); afforded opportunities to cross fertilize ideas, approaches, strategies; provided practical tools and resources for participants to detect, assess and intervene in situations of elder abuse.

Source of Funding for Elder Abuse Prevention Project

CAOT recommends that \$150,000 in funding under Employment and Social Development Canada’s New Horizons Seniors Program be allocated (and ear marked) on an annual basis for CAOT to undertake “Building Capacity or Managing Situations of Elder Abuse Among Inter-professional Health Care Providers” Train the Trainer Workshops.

To date 75 health care professionals received training at an approximate cost of \$900 per participant – the cost includes: travel, food, translation, rental of facilities, legal fees, promotion.

Project 3

Suicide Prevention in the Elderly Population

Suicide – Facts

- During the 2000s, Canada ranked 34th-highest overall among 107 nations’ suicide rates and 17th among the 34 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. According to Statistics Canada, in 2009 there were 3,890 suicides in Canada, a rate of 11.5 per 100,000 people.
- Although suicide deaths affect almost all age groups, those aged 40 to 59 had the highest rates, the trend for seniors has been increasing in recent years according to the 2006 Canadian census data.

Building Capacity amongst Occupational Therapists through Workshops

CAOT proposes to deliver “gold standard” training (that includes prevention, intervention approaches, strategies and tools as well as post intervention supports) in suicide prevention through



one day training seminars at a cost of \$200 per participant – to be shared equally between the Government of Canada and CAOT. The one day training seminar could be pilot tested in 2015 and subsequently rolled out across all jurisdictions.

Source of Funding for the 1 Day Seminars

CAOT recommends that \$100,000 in funding under Employment and Social Development Canada's New Horizons Program be allocated (and earmarked) on an annual basis for CAOT to provide the seminar to some 400 occupational therapists across Canada.

Conclusion

All 3 projects would contribute to the health and well-being of vulnerable Canadians (the "senior adult" population cohort) and health care service providers by increasing knowledge, raising awareness and offering practical advice, approaches, strategies and resources. These projects at a modest total annual cost of \$300,000 on the part of the Government of Canada along with \$50,000 from COAT in financial resources and considerably more by way of in kind support from CAOT, CAA and other partners, will not only contribute to the health and well-being at the individual, family, as well as societal levels but also have a positive impact at the systemic level by decreasing the burden on the health care system which according to CIHI accounted for 45% of health care spending in 2011.