

CHINESE SENIORS SURVEY

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

BY

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CHINESE CANADIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL TORONTO CHAPTER

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Subject: **Chinese Seniors Survey Results – Summary**

Please find enclosed a copy of the Chinese Seniors Survey Results Summary. The Chinese Seniors Survey is part of the CCNC Toronto Chapter project titled “*Addressing Poverty and Service Access Issues for Chinese Canadian Seniors in Toronto: Building Community Capacity for Action.*” This project was funded by the City of Toronto Access and Equity Grant Program and a collaborative effort with the African Canadian Social Development Council (ACDSC), Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), and the Hispanic Development Council (HDC), namely the Alternative Planning Group (APG).

Over the past year CCNC Toronto Chapter consulted the Chinese senior community to identify the major issues facing the seniors. We found that the major issues included low income (for example, several seniors face systemic and slow, time consuming approval processes to receive Old Age Security pension in a timely fashion, upwards of 10 years for a new Canadian citizen of senior age), depression/isolation, abuse, language barrier and the perception that seniors feel duty bound to take care of grandchildren. These issues are also prevalent to the ethnic senior population. The main purpose of this survey was to identify issues related to income and employment affecting Chinese seniors in Toronto. CCNC Toronto Chapter is hoping that the survey results would shed some light on how the community organizations and government agency can address the poverty and service access issues for Chinese Canadian Seniors.

On behalf of CCNC Toronto Chapter, I would like to thank the participants who took part in this survey, our Project Co-ordinator (Shall Shao) for conducting this survey, the Working Women Centre and Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association for support and participation. I would also like to acknowledge the financial support from the City of Toronto Access and Equity Grant Program.

If you have any questions and/comments about this survey, I can be reached by phone at 416-596-0833 ext. 3 or e-mail at info@ccnctoronto.ca. For more information about the Senior Income Security Initiative or to get involved, please visit our website at www.ccnctoronto.ca/seniors.

Sincerely,

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CCNC Toronto Chapter is an organization of Chinese Canadians in the City of Toronto that promotes equity, social justice, inclusive civic participation, and respect for diversity. We achieve this by conducting activities in the areas of: public education, systemic advocacy, community development and coalition building as well as providing assistance to individuals facing discrimination.

CHINESE SENIORS SURVEY RESULTS - SUMMARY

The Chinese Seniors Survey consisted of 20 open and closed-ended questions. Three open-ended questions asked seniors' opinion on their quality of life in Canada. The survey was translated into Chinese and conducted on a voluntary basis between February and May 2006.

There were a total of 75 Chinese seniors participated in this survey. The average age was 68. All the respondents were sponsored by family members in Canada. One third of the seniors have resided in Canada for less than three year. Only 4% of the seniors had a 10-year or more residency status.

Employment and Language Training

Of the total respondents, only 7 of them have worked in Canada. At the time this survey was conducted, none of the respondents were employed although many of them considered themselves to be healthy enough to work. When asked '*what services would you want the community organizations to provide to Chinese seniors*' (question #17), the majority of respondents identified language training such as ESL classes and translation services. The seniors also expressed their need for job search assistance and more employment opportunities. The survey results showed that language competence would improve employability for seniors.

Income

At the time of this survey was conducted, 9 respondents said that they have regular income. The range of income (monthly amount) reported was as low as \$50 to highest \$1500. Turning to children for additional income assistance was the most frequent cited answers. The seniors also mentioned that government assistance such as Old Age Security (OAS) program is an alternative source of income. Many respondents expressed their hope to receive Old Age Security at the time this survey was conducted. (They are waiting to become eligible for the Old Age Security Program).

Housing

The Chinese seniors have expressed their need for more senior housing and long term care facilities. This would reduce the waiting period and availability of good quality senior living conditions.

Public Transit

Many Chinese seniors can not afford to commute by public transit. The respondents felt that free public transit should be provided to seniors aged 75 years and older. Lack of access to public transit also contributes to the limitation of access to community support services and language classes.

Health Care

Most Chinese seniors expressed that dental services should be free for seniors aged 65 years and older. Also, seniors are hoping to learn about healthy aging information (for example, annual health check-up) in a seminar format.

Newly Arrived Immigrant Seniors

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents have resided in Canada for less than three years¹. These newly arrived senior immigrants age range is 59 to 76 years old and have never worked in Canada when this survey was administered. Majority of these seniors said that they are not ready to retire and

¹ According to the Citizenship of Canada Act, a permanent resident must have at least 3 years of residence in Canada within a 4-year period preceding his or her application for citizenship.

healthy enough to work. The major source of income support for these new immigrant seniors came from their children.

Key Findings

Seniors are most susceptible to living in poverty. The survey findings revealed that Chinese seniors share the same issues regardless their length of residency in Canada. The lack of income to support basic needs is a primary issue for the seniors. Income security programs and employment opportunity could help our seniors moving out of poverty.

The issue of employment opportunity is interconnected with language ability. The government and community organizations must provide easily accessible assistance to immigrant seniors to enter or re-enter the workforce. Employment is an alternative source of income to seniors who are not entitled to income security programs.

Many seniors expressed their children are earning low wages. Nevertheless, the seniors are more likely to rely on their children for additional income. Hence, poverty can be transmitted across generations.

Chinese Seniors Survey Results Summarized in Bracket

Sample size: 75

1. How old are you?

Average age: 67.6 (Range: 52 to 77 years of age)

2. When did you come to Canada?

- a. Less than 1 year ago (41.3%)
- b. 1-3 years (25.3%)
- c. 4-6 years (21.3%)
- d. 7-10 years (8%)
- e. More than 10 years (4%)

3. Were you sponsored by someone else like a family member?

- a. Yes (100%)
- b. No

4. Have you worked in Canada before? (73 respondents)

- a. Yes (9.6%)
- b. No (90.4%)

5. If you have worked in Canada before, how long did you work?

- a. Less than 1 year (4 out of 7 respondents)
- b. 1-3 years (1 out of 7 respondents)
- c. 4-6 years (2 out of 7 respondents)
- d. More than 7 years

6. Are you currently employed? (60 respondents)

- a. Yes
- b. No (100%)

- 7. Do you consider yourself healthy enough to be employed? (61 respondents)**
- a. Yes (49.2%)
 - b. No (50.8%)
- 8. Do you have a regular income to support yourself? (70 respondents)**
- a. Yes (4.3%)
 - b. No (95.7%)
- 9. If you have a regular income, please indicate your source? (24 respondents)**
- a. Government (13%)
 - b. Employment (4.2%)
 - c. Family (61%)
 - d. Business
 - e. Other (Please describe it) (26%)
- 10. If you have a regular income, how much is it monthly? (9 respondents)**
 Monthly income reported in this survey range from \$50 to \$1500.
- 11. If you have a regular income, do you find it sufficient to meet your needs? (27 respondents)**
- a. Yes (11%)
 - b. No (89%)
- 12. If you consider your income to be insufficient for your needs, what would you do? (24 respondents)**
- 50% of the respondents said they would ask children for help.
 - 25% of the respondents said they hope to receive government assistance such as Old Age Security program
 - 8 of the respondents said they wanted to work.
- 13. If you consider your income to be insufficient for your needs, do you want the government to help you? (54 respondents)**
- a. Yes (92.6%)
 - b. No (7.4%)
- 14. If you do not have a regular income, do you want the government to help you? (61 respondents)**
- a. Yes (95%)
 - b. No (5%)
- 15. Do you consider yourself retired at this point in time? (61 respondents)**
- a. Yes (72.1%)
 - b. No (27.9%)
- 16. If no, do you consider yourself to be healthy enough to be able to work still? (42 respondents)**
- a. Yes (81%)
 - b. No (19%)

17. In general, what are the most important things that government can do to make your life in Canada more pleasant?

A total of 36 seniors responded to question #17. The answers are summarized by category. According to the respondents, the most important things that the government can do to make their life in Canada more pleasant included the following:

Transit

- provide free public transit to seniors 75 years and old
- lower fees for seniors

Housing

- provide more senior housing
- reduce waiting period

Employment

- provide job search assistance
- provide employment opportunities to seniors

Language

- provide language training opportunities
- provide translation services in Chinese

Income

- Income support programs such as the Old Age Income Security

Health Care

- provide free dental services to seniors 65 years and older
- understand the barriers of seniors in seeking medical help

18. In general, what services would you want the community organizations to provide to Chinese seniors?

A total of 37 seniors responded to question #18. Majority of the respondents identified **language training** is the most essential service, **translation**, **health care** related services (such as annual health check-up), **job search assistance** and seminars on various topics including health, leisure, and culture.

19. In general, what things need to be done to ensure that Chinese seniors do not live in poverty?

A total of 35 seniors responded to question #19. Assistance from the government in terms of **income and housing** are the most frequent responses following by providing more employment opportunities for seniors. Two respondents said that **anti-discrimination policy and equality** in treatment for all seniors are important. Another senior advocated **better job opportunities and benefits for the children** and **lower the cost for child care service**.

20. Would you be willing to join with CCCN Toronto Chapter and other seniors from the African, Chinese, Hispanic and South Asian communities to put pressure on government to take action to address poverty among immigrant seniors? (43 respondents)

- a. Yes (81%)
- b. No (19%)