

Report of the sub-committee of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

Ageism

Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

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**Report of the Sub-Committee on Ageism
to the
President's Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion**

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President's Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion**

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1. Introduction

“Ageism is found throughout our popular culture, in our language, humour, cartoons, advertising and so on.”

*Lillian Zimmerman
Did You Just Call Me Old Lady?*

The Sub-Committee on Ageism of the University’s Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, chaired by Dr. Caroline Andrew, was tasked with addressing two issues: 1) how to make the University of Ottawa more age-friendly and 2) how to mobilize the university to support the creation of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons (CROP). The sub-committee’s inaugural meeting was held on 18 April 2017. What follows is the sub-committee’s response to the chair’s instructions.

One of the most important social developments of the latter part of the twentieth century and first years of the twenty-first century has been the rapid aging of the world’s population. In 1980, there were 378 million people in the world aged 60 years or above. In 2015, there were 901 million, about 12% of the world’s population. By 2050, there are expected to be about 2.1 billion, about 22% of the population (HelpAge International, 2015). “For the first time in human history, in 2050, there will be more persons over 60 than children in the world” (UN General Assembly, 2011, p. 3). In Canada, there are now more people over 64 than under 15.

Population aging may be seen as a major global and national accomplishment, a reason for hope and optimism. But it could also produce more incidents of age discrimination and exclusion and social institutions, including universities, could find themselves unprepared and unable to meet the legitimate needs, expectations, and aspirations of the older population.

Population aging prompted Dublin City University (Ireland) in 2012 to partner with Strathclyde University in Glasgow (Scotland) and Arizona State University in Phoenix (USA) to develop the following ten principles to make universities more hospitable to, more welcoming to, and more supportive of older persons:

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programs.
2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue second careers.
3. To recognize the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master’s or PhD qualifications).
4. To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.

5. To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6. To ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an ageing society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7. To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities.
9. To engage actively with the university's own retired community.
10. To ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population. As

relevant and encompassing as these age-friendly principles are, the list is incomplete. Missing is any reference to the role of the university as an employer and its obligations to older persons who are members of its workforce or wish to become members of its workforce, either academic or administrative. Thus, we would propose an eleventh principle to which uOttawa should adhere: **to ensure that the University's human resource policies, procedures, and practices — including in the hiring of staff and teaching faculty, both full time and part time — are free of ageist bias and conform to the requirements of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.**

Thus far, among Canadian universities, only the University of Manitoba (as of May 2016) and McMaster University (as of October 2017) have been able to declare themselves age-friendly universities, committed to fully implementing the ten principles. The members of the Age-Friendly University Network so far are as follows:

1. Dublin City University (Ireland)
2. Strathclyde University Glasgow (Scotland)
3. Arizona State University (USA)
4. Lasell College (USA)
5. University of Massachusetts, Boston (USA)
6. Central Connecticut State University (USA)
7. National College of Ireland
8. Docklands University of Galway (Ireland)
9. Leeds Beckett University (England)
10. University of Canberra (Australia)
11. University of Paju (South Korea)
12. University of Manitoba (Canada)
13. McMaster University (Canada)
14. The Association for Gerontology in Higher Education

The methodology followed for this report relied mostly on existing literature in addition to conversations with the following:

- Jean-Pierre Allard, responsable du Campus 3/Université du Troisième Âge en Outaouais

- Noémie Boivin, Labour Relations Advisor, Faculty Affairs, uOttawa
- Dr. Jules Carrière, Associate Vice President, Faculty Affairs, uOttawa
- Lisetta Chalupiak, Director, Labour Relations, uOttawa
- Michel Desjardins, Administrative Director, APUO
- Marc Duval, President, APNS-NUEA
- Sean Ford, President, PIPS-IT
- Dr. Linda Garcia, Interim Director, Life Research Institute, uOttawa
- Dr. Monique Harvey, Professeur, Université de Sherbrooke et responsable de l'Université de Troisième Âge
- Richard Hogan, President, SSUO-PSUO
- Robert Johnson, President, APTPUO
- Dr. Kevin Kee, Dean, Faculty of Arts, uOttawa
- Ginette Mercier, responsable du Campus 3/Université du Troisième Âge en Outaouais
- Dr. Marcel Mérette, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, uOttawa
- Sonya Nigam, Director, Human Rights Office, uOttawa
- Dr. Michelle Porter, Director, Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba
- David Robinson, Executive Director, Canadian Association of University Teachers

We also sent a message to the uOttawa community through the *Gazette*, VirtuO, and Uozone informing staff, faculty, and students of the sub-committee's work and inviting them to submit their ideas, comments, and experiences to us. Five responses were received: two respondents offered to work on the sub-committee, a group of uOttawa employees sent several ideas on how to make uOttawa age- friendly, one older faculty member described the unacceptable way he has been treated by the university since he turned 65, and one older student described her frustrating experience with uOttawa's admissions process. In a conversation with one of the people listed above, we learned of another apparent case of ageism having to do with the failure to accommodate but, in a telling request, he asked that we not mention it in our report for fear that the target would be exposed and would suffer negative consequences. We were also approached by an older student whose experience at uOttawa could clearly be described as ageism.

While older workers have been the subject of myriad academic studies, the same cannot be said of older students. There is, unfortunately, a severe lack of formal research on the experiences and attitudes of older students and the challenges they face in the university setting, especially in Canada. As van Rhijn, Lero, Bridge, & Fritz (2016) point out in their article on mature students in Ontario, "Donaldson and Townsend's content analysis of higher-education journals from 1990 to 2003 underscored this lack of attention, finding that only 1.3% of published articles focused on adult students" (p. 30). However, the definition of "mature student" incorporates all students aged "25 years or older," and thus is not particularly instructive when looking at ageism issues.

There is, however, some information to be found on American attitudes in the work of Bronstein (Bronstein, 2001; Bronstein & Farnsworth, 1998; Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon, 1993) and others (Karp, 1985; Macdonald, 1989; and Wolf-Devine, 1988) and on attitudes in the United Kingdom in the work of McGuire (1995), but much of this deals with either the "toxic combination" of ageism and sexism (Martinson & Adetunji, 2012), or the problems of academics particularly, or both. Despite the dearth of Canadian research, we submit our recommendations regarding older students because we expect population aging to result in a spike in the number of older persons seeking to pursue university

courses and with the financial means to do so. It would be in the University's own interest not only to prepare for the increasing enrollment of older students, but also to make a vigorous effort to attract older persons.

As acknowledged above, we did hear from four members of the uOttawa community who feel that they have been victims of ageism, which may or may not indicate a widespread problem with ageism and age discrimination. However, the sub-committee has only been at work for four months, and the level of trust required for people to report such incidents is perhaps lacking at this point. No uOttawa union has filed ageism complaints and the Human Rights Office has dealt with only one such case. The Labour Relations staff has not received any age-related grievances.

Ageism is often subtly delivered, leaving the victim wondering if there would be any point in lodging a complaint. Also, the right to respectful and accommodating treatment may not yet be embedded within the consciousness of older persons to the degree that they would feel justified in reporting ageist incidents, comments, and practices to uOttawa authorities. Or they may feel that there would be negative consequences if they did report such incidents. Indeed, this was the case with two of the complaints that the sub-committee received. It is conceivable that, as older persons begin to take their own rights and aspirations more seriously, ageism and age discrimination complaints will increase markedly. Conversely, if ageism is identified as a widespread social problem, then it may be possible to remedy it, as other forms of discrimination have been identified and made socially unacceptable.

The report unfolds as follows: the next section offers a brief introduction to ageism and then we look at the university through four lenses: 1) the University as employer, 2) the University as educator, 3) the University as academy, and 4) the University as social institution. The report concludes by setting out several recommendations for uOttawa decision-makers.

2. The Problem of Ageism

“Because, in our society, old age tends to be less associated with wisdom and tranquility and more with infirmity and dependence, we fear it. We may be more likely to discriminate against elderly people, in a futile attempt to distance ourselves from what will inevitably occur to each one of us.”

*Claire L’Heureux-Dubé
Former Justice, Supreme Court of Canada
Dickason v. University of Alberta, 1992*

“The Most Tolerated Social Prejudice”

More so than gender, race, or religion, ageism is “the most tolerated social prejudice in Canada” (Revera & IFA, 2012; Harris, 2012). One-third of people surveyed in 2012 admitted to treating someone differently because of age and two-thirds of those over 65 had experienced ageism (compared to 46% in Europe). Demographics warn us that this may be a growing problem. By 2036, the number of Canadians aged 65 and older is estimated to double; by 2051, 25% of the population will be 65 or older.

Coined in 1968 by an American psychiatrist, Robert Butler, ageism is defined as “a systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old... Ageism allows the younger generation to see older people as different from themselves; thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings” (Butler, 1989, p. 139).

Where do such negative views of the elderly come from? Perhaps they were instilled in us in childhood. Those without grandparents or elders to learn from will be familiar with older people only from storybooks, where the elderly are mostly absent. Those who do appear tend to be helpless, deaf, or evil. The evil ones — step-mother or witch — also tend to be women (Ansello, 1976). This ugly old crone stereotype has been debunked by feminists in terms of its sexism, but the embedded ageism remains. Of course, the famous phrase “don’t trust anyone over 30,” which fuelled the hippie movement, remained unchallenged until, of course, that generation became middle aged.

In its policy paper on age discrimination, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) distinguishes between ageism and age discrimination as follows:

Ageism refers to a socially constructed way of thinking about older persons based on negative stereotypes about aging as well as a tendency to structure society as though everyone is young. Ageism refers primarily to attitudinal barriers while age discrimination encompasses actions, namely treating someone in an unequal fashion due to age... Ageism, however, is often the cause of age discrimination. (OHRC, 2009, p. 4)

Notwithstanding the pioneering work of Butler, ageism existed long before he invented the term.

Negative attitudes toward and portrayals of age and aging are rooted in global history. Ageism is ubiquitous, found in cultures all over the planet (Achenbaum, 2015). The international non- governmental organization (NGO), Age International (2017), confirms the prevalence of ageism and age discrimination: “In most countries, it is still considered acceptable to deny people work; access to healthcare; education; or the right to participate in government, purely because of their age” (p. 1).

The manifestations of ageism range from inaccurate and insulting portrayals of aging and of older persons, to patronizing behaviour toward older people, to unequal treatment of older people in employment and other spheres, to grossly inadequate pensions, to elder abuse in private homes and care facilities, and so on. The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) reports that, as of May 2017, ten percent of the complaints it deals with are related to ageism, either in employment or the provision of services.¹

A report by Revera and the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) (2012) discovered some disturbing data:

- Prejudice against older people is worst in Generations X and Y (a.k.a. Millennials); 43% and 42%, respectively, of those surveyed admitted to treating someone differently because of age.
- 21% say that older Canadians are a burden on society.
- 27% of seniors have experienced discrimination from government.
- 34% of seniors have experienced discrimination from healthcare providers, with 78% of them saying that healthcare providers had dismissed their complaints as inevitable signs of aging.
- 89% of Canadians have negative associations of aging.

The three most common forms of age discrimination were found to be

- Being ignored or treated as though invisible (41%).
- Being treated as though older people have nothing to contribute (38%).
- Being assumed to be incompetent (27%).

Other complaints included being treated like a child, being disrespected, or being assumed to have memory loss, to be slow witted, or to have hearing problems.

The survey also asked people about how to combat age discrimination; the top three answers were as follows:

- Investing in technologies to help people live independently for longer.
- Raising awareness of ageism so that it is as socially unacceptable as other “isms,” like sexism and racism.
- Providing more government funding for healthcare solutions that address the specific needs of an aging population.

¹ Email communication between the CHRC and Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr.

Universities, of course, can help with all of these solutions. “Remedying the situation starts with understanding that ageism is not an old person’s problem; it’s a societal problem and a collective responsibility. Ageism affects us all, as employers, policy makers, caregivers, relatives and friends of older adults — and personally, as we ourselves age” (Revera & IFA, p. 3).

Ageism in Higher Education

Higher education has not been immune from ageist attitudes and age discrimination. Indeed, two American scholars go so far as to claim that “ageism permeates academia” (Whitbourne & Montepare, 2017, p. 263). Another scholar, an adjunct professor of sociology, described the evidence of blatant ageism practiced by US colleges and universities as being “overwhelming” and noted that the practice has finally caught the attention of the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (McKee, 2014, p. 1). And this despite research challenging the contention that older academics are substantially less productive than their younger colleagues.

Systematic academic research on ageism in Canadian higher education is lacking; nevertheless, the three causes of ageism in the sector identified by Whitbourne and Montepare seem extendable to Canada. One has to do with the ageist beliefs in the wider society which, according to empirical research, have been reinforced by increasingly negative stereotypes of aging due to the medicalization of aging that heightens fear and anxiety about aging. Further, students from an ageist society will bring their biases into ratings of professors which, in turn, reinforces the views of administrators that older faculty are less effective and productive. A second is the increased cost of higher education which is blamed on older faculty who are considered a financial burden. A third is the age-segregated structure of higher education which creates an “us versus them” attitude. Fortunately, “Efforts to increase intergenerational contact through experiential activities in classes with older adults have proven to be effective tools to build students’ knowledge about aging and address ageist attitudes, suggesting that greater age integration offers a viable strategy to combat ageism in higher education.” (Whitbourne & Montepare, 2017, p. 274).

Numerous studies have shown that aging is not necessarily associated with declining productivity. In one study, Stroebe (2010), a Dutch scholar, reviewed the research on the association of age and scientific productivity undertaken during the last four decades in North America and Europe. His major finding was that “Past performance is a much better predictor of scientific productivity than is age: Researchers who are highly productive in their 30s are also likely to be much more productive in their 60s and 70s than are researchers who are not very productive at a young age.” Thus, when institutions emphasize age over past performance, they are “replacing a strong predictor of research productivity by one that has always been weak and probably has become even less valid in recent years” (p. 671).

Among the studies that Stroebe reviewed was a Quebec study of 6,388 professors and researchers. Comparing the average productivity of all professors with that of active professors, the authors found that it declined for all professors after age 50 but, for active professors, it increased to age 50 and stayed at the same level until age 70, the age limit of the study (Gingras, Larivière, Macaluso, & Robitaille, 2008). Further, the active professors steadily increased their number of papers published in high-impact journals until age 70.

Faculty renewal was the primary consideration in the opposition of several universities to the abolition of mandatory retirement, as argued before the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in *McKinney v. University of Guelph* and in *Dickason v. University of Alberta*. This concern of employers with “rejuvenating the work force” is based on the view that younger workers are more open to innovation, more energetic, more familiar with current methods and concepts, and therefore more able to come up with new ideas.² This view is vigorously contested. For instance, in a short but fascinating paper, Jessica Lee (2017), a former Associate Fellow at the Brookings Institution, reports:

Older workers possess deep work experience and expertise as well as extensive institutional knowledge and professional networks. They also support the entrepreneurial ecosystem: Contrary to the stereotypical image of the 20-something bootstrapping a start-up on her laptop, most entrepreneurs are over 35 — and a significant proportion are older than 50. Moreover, recent research by the Kauffman Foundation found that entrepreneurialism is actually on the rise among 55- to 64-year-olds, while declining among those 20 to 34. In addition to launching businesses themselves, older adults often support start-up firms as mentors and investors. (p. 7)

That entrepreneurialism is on the rise among people in their 50s and 60s while declining among people in their 20s and 30s is not an insignificant development. It is a development that institutions of higher learning, including uOttawa, would do well to consider very thoroughly, especially since older persons will comprise a growing proportion of the population. Lee writes further:

Older workers also increase the age diversity of firms and institutions, opening up opportunities for intergenerational collaboration, problem solving, and innovation. As is true of other types of diversity, age diversity can give firms a competitive edge when developing products, services, and marketing campaigns for different groups... Some scholars have gone so far as to posit that teams composed of both older and younger researchers produce more innovative solutions than teams with similarly aged members. Scholars Mikko Packalen and Jay Bhattacharya assert that, at least in the field of biomedicine, articles written by a younger first author and an experienced last author tend to explore more novel ideas than those with young first and last authors. (p. 7)

Lee’s paper raises another issue related to faculty renewal having to do with the age of those replacing older, long-time professors. Faculty renewal need not always have to mean the hiring of professors in their twenties and early thirties. It can be accomplished by the hiring of new graduates in their forties, fifties, and sixties. A recent graduate of advanced age can bring the same passion, innovative ideas, and deep interest in good teaching to higher education as can a recent graduate in his/her twenties, perhaps more so.³

2 Or, in the words of one American university administrator, “In a forest, you have to cut down the old, big trees so the little trees underneath can grow” (Whitbourne & Montepare, 2017, p. 268). Interestingly, this has been a common belief about trees for many decades, if not centuries, but, in new research into how forests actually grow, biologists are finding that the older trees that seem to be “blocking the sun” are actually connected underground to the younger trees and that they nurture them through a root system more complex than previously understood. In other words, cutting down the big, old trees that nurture the little trees underneath is counter-productive.

3 In the interest of full disclosure, I (DiGiacomo) reveal my own brush with ageism. After receiving a doctorate in political science at an advanced age, I surveyed a half-dozen or so long-time professors about my job prospects. Two of them, a department chair and a future chair, told me, without awkwardness or embarrassment, that they would not hire me because of my age. What was stunning was that these two professors of political science were youngish men who grew up with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. One might have thought that they would have been aware that age

In this regard, former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé pointed out twenty-five years ago in her dissenting opinion in a case pertaining to mandatory retirement at the University of Alberta:

The stereotype of older professors clinging desperately to their posts despite declining abilities simply is not warranted on the evidence. Generally speaking, those who start by being highly productive and creative remain so as they get older, and age seems to have very little influence on the quality and quantity of work produced. Truly exceptional performance is neither the province of the young nor of the old. (Dickason v. University of Alberta, 1992, p. 1183)

Thus did the former Justice support the abolition of mandatory retirement, which finally came several years later.

Ageism in Society

In her article "Silver Tsunami" for *The York University Magazine*, Cynthia Macdonald (2016) probes the issues of retirement and health care in terms of Canada's aging population. While it is "true that some seniors look forward to leaving the workforce... it's also true that others want to stay in it and can't. As sociology professor Stephen Katz points out, our society is terribly ageist: 'Older workers are discriminated against. It's incredibly hard to get a job if you're over 50, let alone 65'" (p. 20). Retirement "promises a carefree period of 30 years ... in which you can do absolutely anything you want. But we pay dearly for that utopian idea, with the presumption that older people aren't good for anything more than having fun" (p. 20). Thomas Klassen, who teaches political science and public policy at York University, says that older workers actually strongly prefer to keep working but work fewer hours; however, employers have not yet adjusted to this model, preferring to see people full time, every day (p. 23). The idea that older workers need to move aside to create jobs for younger workers is also not true, says Klassen: "having more workers employed, rather than fewer, produces an increase in employment opportunities for the economy as a whole" because employed people spend more money than those living on reduced or fixed incomes (p. 23). For example, "if 30 per cent of the population were to stop working, labour force growth would stall badly" (p. 23). Katz argues that "what helps one generation invariably helps another. Universities can help here: Faced with a shrinking younger cohort, they have an opportunity to expand enrollment and enrich discussion by encouraging older students to enrol" (p. 24).

Anne Kingston (2014), for *Maclean's Magazine*, has also tackled the issue of ageism, a process she calls "greywashing" in which old age has been "erased, sanitized or reduced to extreme stereotypes" (p. 43). She looks particularly at health care and at popular culture. *Vogue Magazine's* 2014 "Age issue," for example, "features no actual old faces but plenty of ads for 'age-defying' products, a billion-dollar market" now aimed even at pre-teens (p. 43). As well, a study undertaken by the University of Southern California in 2013 revealed that those over 65 are less frequently seen in movies than children, making up "only 5.5 percent of male characters and 3.7 percent of female characters," a trend that has perhaps been slightly impacted by the "Marigold effect ... inspired by the success of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*" (pp. 43, 45).

In another study from University College London, Kingston reports that “one-third of British people over 50 reported poorer service in restaurants, ill treatment in hospitals, and harassment” (p. 43). A Yale University study on seniors and Facebook — where hate speech based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and disability are banned, but not age — also found frequent abuse. Notably, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg told an audience in 2007 that “Young people are just smarter” than older people. Perhaps he’s unaware of the connection between old age and wisdom, aptly put by Nora Ephron: “Looking back, it seems to me that I was clueless until I was about 50 years old” (p. 45). Or the observation of Anne Karpf, author of *How to Age*, that ageism is a “prejudice against your future self” (p. 44).

As for health care, Kingston quotes Dr. Samir Sinha, director of geriatrics at both Mount Sinai and University Health Network hospitals in Toronto and the head of Ontario’s Seniors Care Strategy, that the inherent problem with health care is that the system was originally designed for “a 27-year-old with a single-source illness” whereas “today 60 percent of hospital users are over 65 and suffer from multifactorial chronic conditions” (p. 45). She also quotes Dr. Brian Goldman, author of *The Secret Language of Doctors*, who exposes the built-in ageism of the health care system, which is very much focused on resource allocation. Older patients with “complicated but uninspiring and incurable conditions are dubbed ‘GOMERs’ (‘get out of my emergency room’), ‘bed blockers’ and ‘failure to die’ ... today’s doctors are astonishingly ignorant of how to take care of older patients” (p. 45).

Here, too, universities, especially uOttawa with its expertise in healthcare training, can make a clear and obvious contribution to the way older people are treated in the health system. An increased focus on gerontology is one of this sub-committee’s recommendations.

3. The University as Employer

“Day-to-day ageism is often difficult to identify, and the slights and inequities [people] sometimes encounter may be attributed to other factors.”

*Phyllis Bronson
Older Women in Academia*

This section has three objectives: first, to identify the ageist stereotypes that are common in the employment context; second, to review some of the requirements of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, to which uOttawa is subject, particularly the employer’s duty to accommodate Code-protected employees, i.e., those who may face discrimination based on one or more enumerated grounds, including age; and third, to set out the major concerns of the administrative retirees of the University.

Ageist stereotypes and older workers

The Canadian workforce is rapidly ageing, consistent with the situation of other industrialized countries. The last Canadian census (2016) showed that the proportion of people aged 45 to 64 in the labour force was at a record high. To deal with this ageing and especially to ensure that older workers are fully integrated, the majority of industrialized countries have implemented laws prohibiting discriminatory practices on the basis of age. In Canada, older workers are protected by both federal and provincial human rights and labour legislation.

The challenge of integrating older workers

However, despite the fact that the labour force is aging and laws exist prohibiting discriminatory practices based on age, there are still problems with how older workers participate in and integrate into the workforce. Older workers are overrepresented in the unemployment statistics of member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and in long-term unemployment statistics for North America, are often the first targeted during restructuring and budget cuts, and are the first encouraged to leave, with often generous early retirement offers—when they are not simply forced out. Studies also show that older workers have limited access to continued training, career development initiatives and promotions compared to their younger colleagues.

These clear integration challenges also reflect the many concerns that older workers have expressed. Several surveys show that many Canadian workers believe they have been the target of discriminatory practices based on their age, as evidenced by the age discrimination-based complaints filed with the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) and the provincial human rights commissions. What’s more, older workers who believe they have been discriminated against have decreased morale and are less committed and motivated. Studies indicate that simply exposing an older worker to prejudices about ageing, such as a belief that older workers are less flexible, sharpens their intention to retire. Additionally, older workers who perceived themselves to have been the target of discriminatory practices based on age exhibited dissatisfaction and, ultimately, professional disengagement.

All studies show that age-based discrimination remains a significant obstacle in the workplace and limits the integration and full participation of older workers, which leads to professional disengagement. Expected labour shortages in many sectors, including teaching, health care, public services, public administration and transportation, mean that there needs to be a more in-depth discussion about age-based discrimination and initiatives are needed to combat it; without such a discussion, organizations will find themselves in trouble as their older workers leave them.

Age-based work stereotypes sustain ageism in the workplace

People often justify or rationalize behaviour in the workplace that discriminates on the basis of age with generally negative beliefs about ageing at work. Older workers are depicted as a “problem” to manage, and an ageing worker is therefore a burden for the business they work for—a belief that is perpetuated by stereotypes about ageing at work.

Stereotypes refer to attitudes held about a group of people on the basis of criteria such as gender, race or age. Although unfounded, these attitudes apply to “all” individuals in the particular social group. This is how people can refer to “women,” “youth,” or “seniors” in a general sense. When these attitudes are negative, they pave the way for discriminatory practices. So how can we talk about “older workers” in general? The following section presents the most common ageist stereotypes in the workplace. It is clear that these stereotypes are fundamentally negative, yet none of them have been validated or confirmed by reality or facts.

This overview of stereotypes shows that the “problem” of ageing at work is not ageing itself, but the belief that people hold and perpetuate through these stereotypes that ageing is synonymous with disability and a decline in performance. However, stereotypes are persistent, and any workplace that fails to challenge them puts its own survival at risk for the following reasons:

- Studies show that older workers who believe they are the target of ageist stereotypes often choose to gradually begin leaving their job. This is a natural defence mechanism against the threat of prejudices that undermine their credibility and reputation. In other words, an older worker sees the perpetuation of these stereotypes as an incentive to leave their job.
- It is likely that discriminatory decisions that aim to exclude older workers are the result of widespread negative stereotypes—this is all the more probable since age-based discrimination persists despite the existence of laws to protect older workers.
- Expected labour shortages in many sectors mean that it is a problem that older workers are excluded or pushed to leave.

Ageist stereotypes: myths and facts about aging at work

Stereotype: Older workers are less productive than young workers.

Reality: All studies show that the relationship between age and productivity is complex and indirect. Potential losses in productivity are balanced out by gains. To give an example, an older worker's declining reaction time can be largely compensated for by their experience, wisdom and teamwork skills. Multiple studies show that older workers are more productive due to their strong involvement in and loyalty to their organizations.

Stereotype: Older workers are less capable of learning.

Reality: An individual can learn and grow throughout their career when their working conditions are adapted for them. Older workers can draw on their extensive experience to learn and acquire new expertise: it may take longer, but experience is a compensating factor.

Stereotype: Older workers can't adapt to technological changes.

Reality: There is no correlation between a worker's age and their use of technology such as computers. Furthermore, people aged 50 to 64 are the fastest growing demographic of Internet users. Finally, continued training can alleviate the adverse effects new technology has on older workers.

Stereotype: Older workers are less committed and motivated than younger workers.

Reality: In general, older workers are more motivated and committed than their younger colleagues. One of the reasons for this is that older workers are more able to devote themselves to their career, as they don't have family responsibilities.

Stereotype: Older workers are absent more often than young workers.

Reality: Studies have actually shown that there is a negative relationship between employee ageing and absenteeism: the older a worker, the less often they are absent.

Stereotype: It costs more to hire and train older workers.

Reality: The facts show that there is no *direct* relationship between salary costs and age, and researchers agree that there is an almost guaranteed return on training older workers, as they are less mobile and more stable.

Policy of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) on Age Discrimination

It is not necessary here to provide an extensive review of the OHRC policy on age discrimination. However, we would do well to remind ourselves of some of the ways by which ageism and age discrimination are demonstrated, of the employer's duty to accommodate, and of the unambiguous stance of the OHRC toward age discrimination.

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* prohibits discrimination on the basis of **age**,⁴ race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, family status, record of offences (in employment only), and disability. This prohibition applies to all social areas including employment; services, goods and facilities like **education**, health care, social services, transit services, shops, restaurants; housing; contracts; and occupational associations, unions, and self-governing professions. Section 5 of the Code not only provides for a right to equal treatment in employment, regardless of age and other factors, but also protects against harassment in the workplace because of those factors.

The OHRC's policy paper on age discrimination states that "Assumptions and stereotypes about older workers are unfortunately all too prevalent in our workplaces" (OHRC, 2009, p. 10). However, it also notes that, contrary to popular belief, there is significant evidence that older workers have the following qualities:

- They are highly productive, offering considerable on-the-job experience.
- They do as well as or better than younger workers on creativity, flexibility, information processing, accident rates, absenteeism, and turnover.
- They can learn as well as younger workers with appropriate training methods and environments.
- They do not fear change but rather fear discrimination (OHRC, 2009, p. 10).

Notwithstanding the Code's prohibition and the demonstrated performance of older workers, they still face considerable difficulties getting hired. While employers are not likely to admit that they did not hire an older person because of his/her age, the OHRC points out that the existence of age discrimination may be suggested by the following:

- Statements about the employer's need to "rejuvenate" the work force.
- Comments about an applicant's appearance or health or the need for someone "full of vim and vigour."
- Rejection of an applicant because of a perceived lack of "career potential" or because the applicant has "too much experience" or is "overqualified" or because the applicant's experience is too "diversified" or too "specialized."
- Rejection of an applicant because of gaps in his/her background or because the applicant does not match the "company image."
- An organizational policy requiring job applicants to be "recent graduates" of a program and the organization is unable to justify this requirement.
- Evidence showing that the employer has demonstrated a preference for hiring persons significantly younger than the applicant.

Ryerson University legal scholar, Pnina Alon-Shenker (2016), agrees that age discrimination is rarely overt. Rather, it stems from implicit bias. And often that implicit bias comes from an unlikely source: older people themselves. "Although employers are often senior themselves, they are not less likely to discriminate against those in their own age group. Senior workers are frequently discriminated against

⁴ The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and all of the provincial and territorial human rights acts prohibit discrimination based on age.

by managers of their own age, who might not perceive themselves as old or might fear aging and wish to distance themselves from what will inevitably occur” (pp. 305–306). Such feelings are not likely to be openly expressed.

The OHRC policy document also identifies how unequal treatment because of age may be demonstrated on the job. An employer may:

- Limit or withhold employment opportunities including transfer, promotion, and training opportunities.
- Subject an older worker to an unwanted transfer or not assign an older worker to certain projects.
- Subject an older worker’s performance to a higher level of scrutiny or, conversely, fail to performance manage because of a belief that the person will be retiring soon.
- Not recall someone from lay-off because of age. (OHRC, 2009)

Age discrimination may also be evidenced by comments and conduct that are harassing or lead to a poisoned work environment. “For example, a manager tells new employees that they will be eligible for promotion as soon as the ‘geezer’ in the branch retire” (OHRC, 2008, p. 19).

Alon-Shenker (2013) notes that age-related stereotypes continue to be used in workplace decision-making, with the predictable results. “Fewer training opportunities are available for senior workers; when they are dismissed, senior workers are unemployed for longer periods; and they are often coerced into early retirement. Those who do find a job at an advanced age often have to accept non-standard work” (pp. 33–34).⁵

Another example of unequal treatment on the job is illustrated in the case of *MacKinnon v. Celtech Plastics Ltd.*, 2012. In this case, a sixty-seven year old employee with thirty-five years of experience was recalled from lay-off but then subjected to an unusually heavy workload, held to unreasonably high standards, and harassed by his foreman. Representing himself, he argued before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario that the motivation behind these actions was to make work so unpleasant that he would quit, which he did. The Tribunal agreed that he was the victim of age discrimination. The decision stands as a warning to managers and employers who would use the tactic of creating a miserable work environment (constructive dismissal) to get rid of older employees.

With respect to retirement, Parliament and the provincial and territorial legislatures have all abolished mandatory retirement at age 65, although employers may still make age-related distinctions if based on a *bona fide* occupational requirement or qualification (BFOR/Q). To encourage turnover, some employers may pressure older employees into leaving their organization. However, the Ontario policy paper warns that age discrimination concerns will be raised “if there is direct or implicit pressure being

5 Non-standard work is also known as precarious work, defined as “work that departs from the normative model of the standard employment relationship (which is a full-time and year-round employment relationship for an indefinite duration with a single employer).” It “tends to be associated with the following forms of employment: part-time employment, self-employment, fixed-term work, temporary work, on-call work, home working, and telecommuting” (Fudge, 2006, p. 3). The characteristics of precarious work “include job insecurity, low wages, limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, and a lack of control over the labour process...precarious work is also gendered” (Vosko, 2004, p. 4). It obviously includes the work of the numerous part-time professors who teach many if not most of the undergraduate courses and students at universities today.

applied to accept retirement” (OHRC, 2008, p. 15). While voluntary retirement programs are allowable, the policy paper advises that eligibility criteria be shared with all staff, regardless of age, “through a neutral medium such as a written document” (p. 16) rather than any communication targeting older workers.

Some employers may be tempted to use job restructuring programs as a pretext for terminating older workers and thus engaging in discrimination against those workers. For example, in *Salter v. Newfoundland, 2001*, a fifty-five year-old employee was told his position would be abolished in a government downsizing effort and he would be terminated. However, instead of abolishing the position, the employer rehired a younger employee to fill the position. A Board of Inquiry found that the employer had considered the employee’s pension eligibility as a factor in terminating his employment. It ruled that considering pension eligibility as a justification for termination was synonymous with considering the employee’s age and, therefore, amounted to age discrimination.

In another case, *S.C.F.P. Locale 675 c Société Radio-Canada*, an administrative restructuring resulted in the demotion of a sales employee. The employer said the restructuring was necessary to make space for younger workers. An arbitrator recognized the right of employers to restructure but stated that this must be done in accordance with the collective agreement and the human rights of the individual. The arbitrator found that the employee’s demotion was motivated in part by age discrimination (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2016).

The Duty to Accommodate

The duty to accommodate refers to the employer’s duty to remove barriers preventing Code-protected persons from fully taking part in the workplace in a way that responds to their individual circumstances (OHRC, 2008). “Accommodation is a fundamental and integral part of the right to equal treatment” (p. 95). While this report focuses on the employer’s duty to accommodate, the obligation applies not only to the workplace but also to the provision of services, like education, and housing.

As a result of judicial decisions, primarily *British Columbia (Public Service Employee Relations Commission) v. BCGSEU, 1999*, known as the Meiorin decision and the leading court ruling on accommodation, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) made clear that employers are obligated to accommodate the workplace needs of Code-protected employees, including older workers, up to the point of undue hardship. It stated:

Employers designing workplace standards owe an obligation to be aware of both the differences between individuals, and differences that characterize groups of individuals. They must build conceptions of equality into workplace standards. By enacting human rights statutes and providing that they are applicable to the workplace, the legislatures have determined that the standards governing the performance of work should be designed to reflect all members of society, in so far as this is reasonably possible....To the extent that a standard unnecessarily fails to reflect the differences among individuals, it runs afoul of the prohibitions contained in the various human rights statutes and must be replaced. The standard *itself* is required to provide for individual accommodation, if reasonably possible. (p. 38)

In Alon-Shenker’s (2012) interpretation, the SCC judgment requires that employers

develop standards that accommodate all employees with respect to discrimination on a prohibited ground up to the point of undue hardship. Because age discrimination in employment is often systemic, employers should not only have to refrain from it but should also have to act positively to alleviate it, and to build conceptions of equality into their workplace rules and practices. (p. 203)

Accordingly, OHRC policy states that, when setting up new rules, policies, and procedures, buying new equipment, designing workstations, and so on, employers need to make choices that do not create barriers for persons protected under the Code. “For example, break policies should take into account, where possible, the needs of pregnant or breastfeeding women, persons whose religion may require them to take time to worship during the work day, and the needs of persons with disabilities” (OHRC, 2008, p. 44). The OHRC identifies the following as common examples of accommodations made by employers:

- Providing equipment, services, or devices so an employee can do the essential duties of his or her job.
- Implementing flex-time policies to help employees balance their work with care-giving obligations.
- Modifying uniforms or hours of work so they are compatible with employee’s religious observances.
- Making a room available during working hours for a breastfeeding mother to express breast milk.
- Providing non-gendered washroom facilities for persons who are transsexual (OHRC, 2008)

It should be emphasized that the duty to accommodate may arise in relation to any of the grounds of the Code, **including age**. The OHRC policy paper states clearly that “the duty to accommodate requires designing a workplace that is inclusive of older workers. It also requires individualized assessment and accommodation to meet the changing needs and capacities of older workers” (OHRC, 2009, p. 17). So, for example, “...if an older worker finds a physically demanding task challenging, the employer should either assign it to someone else, if it is not one of the essential duties of the position, or seek other ways in which to accommodate the worker” (OHRC, 2009, p. 17). The age-related conditions of some older employees that may need to be accommodated include disabilities of various types, as well as fatigue, burn-out, outdated skills, and the burden of caring for family members (Alon-Shenker, 2012).

It may be discriminatory if an older worker requests but does not receive appropriate age-related accommodation and then faces discipline leading to termination because of failure to perform (OHRC, 2008).

As alluded to above, the duty to accommodate is not unlimited. An employer is not required to accommodate an employee’s needs beyond the point at which the accommodation causes “undue hardship” to the organization. While some financial expense is to be expected, the costs of an accommodation cannot be so great as to interfere with the successful functioning of the organization.

Workplaces governed by the Ontario Code are expected to have accommodation policies and procedures in place and managers and supervisors should know the process to follow when an accommodation request is made.

To further promote a culture of acceptance at uOttawa, **we recommend that the Human Rights Office, with the assistance of interested faculty members and retirees, offer information sessions and materials to managers at all levels, students, and professors, on how ageism manifests itself in various contexts, as well as on OHRC policy on age discrimination including the duty of employers to accommodate older employees.**

Concerns of Retirees

Retiree benefits at uOttawa are the least favourable when compared to the benefits of retirees at other Ontario universities. It is therefore no surprise that the main concern of both academic and administrative seniors is the cost of health insurance after retirement and, up to a certain point, travel insurance.

In particular, administrative/support staff have good benefits when they work for the University but, as soon as they retire, their health insurance with the University ends. Up to age 65, participation in the university's collective insurance is at the retiree's expense but beyond 65 such participation is not allowed and retirees face a dire situation. With an average pension of \$25,000/year (\$21,000/year for women), too many retirees cannot afford health insurance. Provincial coverage does not cover all medication costs, nor does it cover dental expenses, eyeglasses, hearing aids, physiotherapy, etc. The message perceived by retirees is that they are no longer important to the university (except perhaps to the Development Office).

A reason for this inequity is the fact that administrative/support staff retirees do not have union representation. Professors, notwithstanding that their medical coverage also ceases upon retirement, are represented by APUO, which has negotiated a health account of \$1,350/year. This compares to \$96/year for support staff, which has not increased since 2002.

We also believe that the university should re-evaluate the options to extend its health insurance plan to retirees to ensure that it treats its pensioners with the same consideration as when they were active employees. The university should ensure that the health benefits of administrative retirees should be equal to the health benefits of retired professors. Pensions may be different, which causes no grievances, but the health benefits should be similar and fair.

This may mean redistributing the benefits of active employees to include their retirement years. It may also mean that all administrative staff unions should be mandated to include retiree benefits in their constitution, as is the case for APUO.

We recommend that uOttawa improve post-retirement benefits to optimize equity between staff and professors, and well-being for all current and former members of the university community.

Current uOttawa policies do not facilitate gradual retirement. One reason may be the cost of benefits for part-time work. A number of older members of staff would prefer to work part-time before or after retirement for various personal reasons. The university may be losing high performers who could still make significant contributions due to their research, teaching, or administrative experience.

Older workers, both professors and staff, would greatly appreciate access to various options for gradual retirement. We believe that uOttawa should examine current policies to add more flexibility to the system, adapt to personal situations, and retain older employees who are still productive but would prefer to work part-time.

We recommend that uOttawa examine existing policies and procedures regarding gradual retirement.

We also recommend involving uOttawa retirees in campus life. For example, this could mean hosting an annual President's reception for both faculty and staff retirees so that they can meet deans, directors, and others, as was done on 7 November 2016 as an initiative of the Development Office. This type of gathering has the potential to re-engage retirees in campus life and in various volunteer opportunities. Other universities, such as the University of Manitoba, hold such an annual event.

Seniors love to learn but credit courses are not always the best model for them. The university's Centre for Continuing Education used to offer non-credit "Personal Enrichment" courses of interest to seniors and retirees but this has been discontinued. Some universities, following the model of the third-age university, offer classes geared to seniors taught either by faculty members or by retired volunteers. Centre 50+ on campus, created many years ago thanks to a research grant for its first year of operations, was closed a few years ago when the building (192 Laurier East) was declared unsafe. Professor Caroline Andrew used to hold a seminar there on current political issues, which was very popular with Anglophone seniors from Sandy Hill. Centre 50+ offered a great variety of courses on topics of interest to seniors (language classes, history, arts and culture, etc.). Having no place to meet, the group dissolved. Retirees now have no place dedicated to them on campus where they can meet and socialize while learning, contributing, and staying connected to the university, as is the case for alumni with the Alex Trebek Alumni Hall.

We, therefore, recommend that the President involve uOttawa retirees in campus life, the university re-open the Centre 50+, and resume Personal Enrichment courses for seniors.

4. The University as Educator

“It might take 75 years, but I will graduate like everyone else.”

*Marion Goldsmith Klarman
Dreaming of Graduation*

In this part of our report, we focus on the University’s role as an educator. In Canada, there are at least 38 university-based centres whose mission is to provide an education for older persons or about older persons; the former offer courses dedicated to the interests and concerns of seniors, the latter offer research and training programs on the aging process. In most cases, the centres do both. (See Appendix 1 for a list of centres).

As shown in our list of recommendations, we recommend that **the Life Research Institute (LRI) take a broad, multi-disciplinary approach to its work, considering the desirability of partnership building between uOttawa and the community and considering the creative initiatives adopted by other centres on aging.** To illustrate, the following surveys eight university-based centres/programs and an emerging third-age university to highlight some of the very interesting and creative initiatives implemented by those centres.

Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba⁶

The centre, now thirty-five years old, has the following objectives:

- To generate and facilitate rigorous basic, applied, and translational research in order to add to the body of knowledge in aging.
- To provide a focus, impetus, and direction to the research activities in aging in Manitoba.
- To promote, disseminate, and mobilize knowledge related to aging.
- To promote and support undergraduate and graduate education, training, and networking in the area of aging.
- To create research training opportunities for students in aging.
- To foster effective partnerships with stakeholders locally, nationally, and internationally.
- To promote and facilitate an age-friendly university at the University of Manitoba.

The research agenda of the centre covers a wide range of topics, from elder abuse, to pharmacology, to neuropsychology and cognitive processes, to housing issues, to labour market issues, to healthy living. It has almost eighty research affiliates from within the University of Manitoba and three other universities.

⁶ This information on the centre was obtained from its website, <http://umanitoba.ca/centres/aging/index.html>

Since 1997–98 the centre has been offering a research fellowship worth \$11,000 to the University's professors to support aging-related research in any discipline. One or two are awarded each year. A list of the recipients shows that they come from a variety of faculties and departments including Medicine, English, Anthropology, Accounting and Finance, Community Health Sciences, Economics and Labour Studies, Civil Engineering, Psychology, History, Law, and Kinesiology.

For students interested in Gerontology, the centre offers a Graduate Specialization in Aging. The university also offers an Inter-Faculty Option in Aging, akin to a minor in Aging. Students must take courses in the health and social aspects of aging and can choose from a list of approved courses from each faculty. To encourage studies in aging, the centre offers four different student awards, worth from \$500 to \$4,000, made available through donations to the centre.

The university also runs a Summer Research Training Institute based on a partnership between the College of Nursing, the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, the Faculty of Education, and the Centre on Aging. This program offers a variety of workshops designed to provide introductory research skills and knowledge for students, research assistants, research staff, and faculty members. Any faculty member or researcher, his/her students, and research staff affiliated with any of the partnering faculties and units may participate in the Summer Research Training Institute.

The centre hosts regular meetings during the fall and winter semesters to provide students who have an interest in aging related topics with an interdisciplinary opportunity to engage with one another, discuss shared interests, network with peers, learn about current issues in gerontology from researchers and practitioners, and stay up-to-date on aging related topics.

The centre sponsors a Research Seminar Series, an Annual Spring Research Symposium, and an annual Research Forum, all intended to make current research known to the academic community as well as to community organizations, government, and health and social agencies.

Arizona State University⁷

Arizona State University (ASU), a member of the Age-Friendly University Network, is America's largest, with over 80,000 students. Over a decade ago, it set out to follow a new trajectory that emphasized access to all demographics and social transformation for the public good.

As part of this new emphasis, the university's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) developed a new mission and a new set of objectives. Its mission is to provide university-quality learning experiences for adults 50 and over through diverse classes, campus-based learning opportunities, and civic engagement initiatives. Its specific objectives are the following:

- To connect older adults (aged 50 and above) to the intellectual, social, and cultural environments that define ASU.
- To build a sense of community among older adults — with each other and with ASU.
- To provide older adults with pathways for public service.

Participants pay a small membership fee per semester and a small fee per course. Courses are three-session short courses that mirror the university's full range of academic courses available, taught

⁷ The information contained in this section comes from Talmage, Mark, Slowey, & Knopf (2016).

almost entirely by university faculty or faculty affiliates. The pedagogy emphasizes dialogic learning. Community formation among older students is built through special events, celebrations, public displays of art and writings produced in the courses, gatherings at off-campus bistros, and other ways of linking participants. In addition, classroom learning is mixed with service learning. “OLLI learners participate in service opportunities ranging from inner city school tutoring to environmental advocacy to participating in public venues dedicated to active ageing and abundant living” (Talmage, Mark, Slowey, Knopf, 2016, p. 546).

The university has undertaken other significant initiatives beyond those of the OLLI. First, scholarship resources are available for older adults seeking to enroll in traditional degree programs. Second, an Emeritus College allows for an ongoing association with retired scientists, scholars, and artists. The college provides infrastructure and resources for nearly 400 retired university faculty to engage in research projects and to collaborate with older adults in research. It has a Dean, faculties, and its own journal. Third, the university is developing a relationship with Encore U (Encore.org), an organization dedicated to helping older adults channel their energies into public service, to develop ways for older adults wishing to pursue academic degree programs and certificates related to serving the public good. Fourth, the university is developing new forms of intergenerational learning and mentoring. “Successes have ranged from honours courses taught simultaneously to older adults and traditional students, promulgation of age-friendly community projects co-created by older adults and traditional students, and student achievement programmes moving older adults into mentoring roles for undergraduate students” (Talmage, Mark, Slowey, Knopf, 2016, p. 546).

Finally, the university is using its resources to support research into aging and longevity. It has created a Centre for Healthy Outcomes in Aging and a Centre for Sustainable Health. It has also developed strategic alliances with medical institutions such as the Mayo Clinic to advance research into human longevity, biomedical technology, and health care delivery. The university’s own researchers in the social and natural sciences have formed research clusters on cognitive processes in aging, socio- medical advances in caregiving, older adult community design, aging resilience, abundant aging, and rehabilitation and health sensor technologies.

University of Western Ontario

Western University has two centres that address age-related issues: the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging (CCAA) and the Centre for Population, Aging and Health (CPAH).

Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging⁸

Established in 1989, the CCAA’s mission is “to develop, encourage and promote an active, healthy lifestyle for Canadian adults that will enhance the dignity of the aging process.” Its activities fall into three categories: 1) leadership training, 2) research, and 3) exercise programs. Its goals are the following:

⁸ The information on the CCAA was obtained from its website: <http://www.uwo.ca/ccaa/about/index.html>

- To become a high-quality national centre supporting physical activity for the aging population.
- To become the national coordinating and accreditation institute for CCAA's community-based programs and services for the elderly.
- To support, encourage, and disseminate nationally research into an active lifestyle for older adults, and to act as a resource for Health Canada and other national organizations.
- To establish international alliances and promote an open exchange of scientific knowledge, health, and community programs to benefit active older adults.
- To educate provincial governments, industry, and social agencies on the benefits of an active aging population.
- To be the national data centre for information on activity and aging.

The centre trains senior fitness instructors and restorative care specialists, and it offers a variety of training sessions, workshops, and conferences to supplement existing senior fitness instructor or restorative care specialist qualifications.

Research conducted through the CCAA uses both basic and applied research approaches to broaden the knowledge base of information related to older adults and physical activity. The centre's basic research activities are carried out by faculty members and students affiliated with Western's School of Kinesiology. It also sponsors conferences and guest lectures.

In-house exercise programs are offered Monday to Friday to over 500 older adults in the community. The average age of these participants is 75, some are as young as 50, and several are in their 90s. Exercise programs include combined fitness classes, personal training, strength training, dynamic balance training, lifestyle coaching, and the Get Fit for Active Living (exercise and education for beginner senior exercisers). There are also exercise programs tailored specifically to individuals with osteoporosis, stroke, and chronic obstructive lung disease.

Centre staff include faculty and researchers, community outreach staff, and physical activity trainers and instructors.

Centre for Population, Aging and Health⁹

The CPAH is housed in Western's Department of Sociology. It encourages, organizes, and supports social science research in the areas of population, aging, and health. It describes itself as a community of scholars working and collaborating on research and methods that advance the scientific understanding of changing population dynamics, individual and population aging, and the social determinants of health. The centre's objectives are the following:

- To encourage collaboration in research, and to provide resources for associated research and

⁹ The information on the CPAH was obtained from its website, http://sociology.uwo.ca/cpah/about_us/index.html

education.

- To promote multidisciplinary research in areas of population, aging, and health through discussion, collaboration on research grants, dissemination of research findings, and maintaining an active list of collaborators.
- To provide mentoring and training to undergraduate and graduate students.

The centre has several members from a range of social science disciplines and the scope of their research interests is very broad. The research themes are as follows:

- Social inequality in physical and mental health over the life course.
- Gender, work, family, and aging.
- Population movement, inequality, and well-being.

McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging¹⁰

This centre was established in 1985 as a multidisciplinary academic unit dedicated to gerontology research and postgraduate teaching on the mechanisms of aging as well as the prevention of age-associated disorders. It is part of McGill's Faculty of Medicine. The centre has achieved international recognition for its integrative work on neurodegeneration.

The centre's long-term objectives include healthy aging, delaying symptoms in genetically predisposed individuals, and training of a cadre of basic and clinical scientists in gerontology. Its eleven-member staff includes administrative and professional personnel. It also has 99 associate and affiliated members, both professors and students. It collaborates with the Pasteur Institute in France, l'Institut Universitaire de Gériatrie in Switzerland, and several universities in the United States — University of Illinois, University of Southern California, University of Indiana, Columbia University — as well as several other institutions around the world.

The centre undertakes a variety of knowledge transfer activities. For instance, since 2007 it has organized the Brainy Boomers public lecture series. It also organizes lectures for scientists and research training for students.

Currently, the centre is engaged in two studies on Alzheimer's Disease as well as a study on the prevention of neurodegenerative diseases. It runs research clinics in memory and cognitive dysfunction, Alzheimer's Disease, and normal aging. It also operates research programs in genetics, endocrinology, pharmacology, molecular biology, neurochemistry, neuropathology, and behavioural psychology.

Funding for the centre comes from a variety of sources including pharmaceutical companies (e.g., Novartis), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Alzheimer's Society of Canada, and the Fonds de la Recherche en Santé du Québec.

¹⁰ The information on the McGill centre was obtained from its website, <http://aging.mcgill.ca/index.html>

Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health, University of Victoria¹¹

Established in 1989, this multi-disciplinary research centre conducts and supports aging-related research in its many forms, including quantitative, qualitative, longitudinal, experimental, and intervention research that is relevant and supportive of the needs of an aging community. It has the following objectives:

- To add to the body of knowledge on aging and health by stimulating and conducting rigorous basic and applied research.
- To provide a focus and direction to the university's and region's research activities in the area of aging and health.
- To facilitate communication and collaboration among scholars, practitioners, government officials, and older adults.
- To contribute to the training of skilled research personnel, which includes promoting post- doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate training within the area of aging and health.
- To mobilize knowledge on aging and health with scientists, practitioners, and the public.
- To promote the translation of research findings into interventions, services, products, and policies relevant to older adults.

Much of the research is based on a broad orientation to health that includes attention to the social, psychological, environmental, and cultural contexts in which people live, and the institutions responsible for the health of our population. Aging is regarded as a lifelong process requiring attention to developmental influences and changes that occur throughout life. Efforts to address these areas draw on the expertise of faculty from many university departments including anthropology, biology, business, child and youth care, computer science, economics, engineering, exercise science, geography, health information science, history, the Island Medical Program, law, nursing, philosophy, political science, psychology, public administration, public health and social policy, social work and sociology, as well as researchers in the community and from other universities.

The institute has several research projects underway as well as self-management programs to help people deal with cancer, chronic pain, chronic conditions, and diabetes. It also has an outreach and knowledge diffusion program. For instance, every spring, the University of Victoria Retirees' Association and the Institute present a free lecture series called Masterminds. The institute also has its own YouTube channel.

The institute has twelve researchers, seven administrators, fifty-five research affiliates within the University of Victoria, twenty-nine external research affiliates, forty-one student affiliates, four post- doctoral affiliates, nine community affiliates, and thirteen partners. The University of Victoria Retirees Association is among the thirteen partners and is represented on the two governance committees.

¹¹ The information on the institute was obtained from its website,
<http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/aging/index.php>

A number of scholarships are available to Master's and doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows.

Gerontology Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston¹²

University of Massachusetts Boston is another member of the Age-Friendly University Network. Its Gerontology Institute, with seventeen staff members, carries out basic and applied social and economic research on the aging process and engages in public education on aging policy issues, with an emphasis on these four areas: 1) income security, 2) health (including long-term care), 3) productive aging, and 4) basic social and demographic issues related to aging.

The Gerontology Institute consists of three centres:

- The Pension Action Center, which offers counseling for citizens on their pension rights.
- The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), which provides lifelong learning, trips, and social activities for those over the age of 50.
- The Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging, which conducts applied research aimed at addressing the well-being of New England's older residents.

Recently, the institute joined forces with an organization called LeadingAge to undertake applied research on long-term services and supports for older adults.

The University of Massachusetts Boston also has a Department of Gerontology, which offers Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programs, as well as certificates in different areas of gerontology.

The Gerontology Institute has undertaken a range of research projects, including the following:

- Determining how much income elders need to live modestly in their communities throughout the US.
- Developing a methodology for reporting on key indicators of healthy aging in Massachusetts.
- Estimating patient-, provider-, and institution-level effects on Latino-white disparities in end-of-life care and treatment goal attainment.
- Convening a group of academics, representatives of public and private health agencies, and employers to examine ways of increasing workforce development among workers over age 50 to maintain Massachusetts' economic competitiveness.

¹² The information contained in this section was obtained from the institute's website, <https://www.umb.edu/gerontologyinstitute/about>

Carleton University¹³

Carleton does not have a centre on aging but it does have three initiatives in place that are worthy of note: 1) the Learning in Retirement Program, 2) the Enriched Support Program, and the Aboriginal Enriched Support Program, and 3) the Carleton University Association for Life-long Learning (CUALL).

The Learning in Retirement Program was established seventeen years ago to provide retired and semi-retired individuals with the opportunity to learn for personal satisfaction while participating in a community of life-long learners who enjoy reading, listening, and discussing topics of common interest. There are no prerequisites, no exams, and no grades. Lecture series offered in the Learning in Retirement Program have traditionally been held at the university with some recently being offered at outside locations such as the National Gallery of Canada. Participants in the Learning in Retirement Program can hear lectures, engage in discussions, watch films, study reading material, and generally learn within classes of between fifteen and seventy-five students. They also have borrowing privileges at Carleton's MacOdrum library.

The Program currently offers six sessions every year, each four to six weeks in length. Two sessions are offered in the fall (September–December), one in the winter (January–February), two in the spring (March–May), and one in the summer (June). Each session offers a number of unique lecture series and workshops, taught by experts in their field. Topics offered include art history, music, science, politics, history, religion, social studies, philosophy, and memoir writing.

The Enriched Support Program and the Aboriginal Enriched Support Program are intended to help students, including older students, get started on university in a full-time university program, earning credits that will count toward a degree. Students can take up to three first-year university courses. In addition, students receive academic support in small, weekly workshops that help them make the transition to university-level work, benefit from academic coaching, and get advice from advisors about academic goals and options.

The CUALL is an association of mature adults that promotes activities based on local and current cultural events, as well as academically driven lectures and discussion groups. Established in 2014, the association's program is based on member interests. In its first year, the program was focused on music, theatre, and opera, with discounted tickets and talks, both tied to events in these three areas. There is an annual membership fee of \$40 per member (\$70 for couples).

Université du Troisième Âge en Outaouais

Subject: The Université du Troisième Âge en Outaouais (UTAO) project, a collaboration between the University of Ottawa (Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Social Sciences) and Université de Sherbrooke, which was launched by Campus 3 (formerly the Centre des aînés de Gatineau) and which will be the first university of the third age (U3A) in the region.

¹³ This information was obtained from the following pages of the Carleton website, Learning in Retirement Program: <https://carleton.ca/linr/>; Enriched Support Program, Aboriginal Enriched Support Program: <https://carleton.ca/esp/>; Carleton University Association for Life-long Learning: <https://carleton.ca/linr/cuall/>

Context: Lifelong learning and knowledge acquisition are positively correlated with well-being, social involvement and active citizenship, and to an even greater degree for seniors (Raymond, Sévigny and Tourigny, 2012). The National Capital Region, which has a solid and diversified economy, stands out from the rest of Quebec and Ontario due to its large concentration of retirees aged 50 or older. Studies show that retirees are more active and involved than before, especially when it comes to education and lifelong learning. This is the context in which **Campus 3** (formerly the Centre des aînés de Gatineau) created the first **Outaouais U3A, Université du Troisième Âge en Outaouais / UTAO**, which will have satellite campuses throughout Outaouais, Upper Gatineau, Petite-Nation and MRC des Collines, among other areas. Starting in September 2017, UTAO will offer university-level courses, conferences and workshops. Université de Sherbrooke created its own university of the third age 40 years ago, and will pilot the project, in the interest of quality control. All individuals aged 50 and older who want to gain more knowledge and learn for the sake of learning will be invited to enroll in UTAO. Courses will be taught mainly by retired professors.

Why work with the University of Ottawa?

The University of Ottawa is a bilingual university with an established reputation for research excellence, and is in a unique position with regards to education and lifelong learning for retired seniors. Whether it be in history, anthropology, psychology, fine arts, language and literature, philosophy or geopolitics, we clearly have the expertise necessary to provide National Capital Region seniors with a “lifelong learning” retirement model. The Campus 3 and University of Ottawa teams have agreed that the University of Ottawa adds a great deal of value as a collaborating partner of UTAO. As stated previously, our university excels in the fields of social sciences, health sciences, humanities and fine arts. These are clearly the fields that primarily interest retirees (e.g., learning a new language, learning to play a musical instrument or about different aspects of ageing, or studying philosophy, sociology or psychology). By taking part in the UTAO project, the University of Ottawa could offer courses in the Outaouais region *in French and English* (regions such as Wakefield and Chelsea). These courses could be taught by retired professors or University of Ottawa Ph.D. students. The University of Ottawa’s collaboration on the UTAO project has several positive effects:

- It plants the “University of Ottawa” flag on the Quebec side of the river (which would almost certainly help dispel some myths about the uniquely Anglo-Saxon nature of the university).
- It positions the University of Ottawa as one of the great universities for seniors education in the National Capital Region.
- It indirectly helps to recruit new students, through their grandparents.
- It provides the University of Ottawa with experience about how universities of the third age operate, so that the university can eventually create its own infrastructure in Ontario.

5. The University as Academy

“As adults being placed in a subordinate position, some PhD students experience a sense of infantilization alongside the conflicting expectation that they develop a professional identity.”

*Melonie Fullick
“My grief lies all within”*

In 1970, 50-year-old Olive Dickason, now known as the mother of Indigenous studies in Canada, applied to enter the Master's in History program at the University of Ottawa. Her children were grown and she wanted to put her many years of experience as a journalist to work unearthing the neglected history of Canada's First Nations. She wrote her MA thesis in three months and then turned her attention to a PhD, also finishing in impressive time. In 1976, University of Alberta hired her for a junior faculty position, considering themselves lucky to get such a single-minded researcher. Their commitment to her, however, lasted only 8 years. When Dickason turned 65, the university pushed her into mandatory retirement. She fought back, citing the equality provisions of Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which had just come into effect.¹⁴ She won in the lower courts, but lost at the Supreme Court, forcing her into the position of sessional lecturer if she wanted to keep teaching.

Dickason's academic career highlights several aspects of the ageism that still pervade academic culture, the essence of which is the belief that there is a “proper” age for graduate studies, for tenure track hiring, and for retirement. The “ideal” pathway requires full-time commitment, with a seamless BA/MA/PhD that leads to the tenure track by the early 30s at the latest. Tenure comes before 40, leaving 25 to 30 good years of research time before the well-deserved retirement at age 65, when the academic bows out of university life and moves off to his own study, or to travel the world. The fact that this pathway is inherently that of a privileged white male, leaving no time for maternity leave, no time for illness, no time for parenting or taking care of parents, no time for earning a living while studying, has been noted by many. The idea that we have evolved beyond this patriarchal model is optimistic at best; the implementation of a newer, more inclusive way of academic life keeps stumbling over the crumbling old belief system.

“One Long Eugenics Test”

On the “approved pathway” to academia, graduate students must be in their 20s. The structure of the supervisor–graduate student relationship is one of mentor–mentee, parent–child, or, as one professor

¹⁴ The Charter became law in 1982 and the equality provisions came into effect in 1985. They are sections 15.1 and 15.2 of the Charter:
15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

put it, lord–vassal. Like any relationship, however, the supervisory relationship is best when it is mutually beneficial and collegial, which often seems harder to achieve than it should be, and age is often a factor. For older graduate students, being treated like a child is just not on, but some supervisors seem to have trouble shifting gears to accommodate a more equal relationship.

The age at which age starts to become a factor can be shockingly young. As one student who dropped her PhD program relates, “I was one of those students who had a hard time figuring out what I wanted to do. So I started and abandoned a couple of degrees, worked, and travelled, before finally finishing an Honours degree. I was 29 when I graduated.” When she told one of her professors that she had been accepted into the MA program, he replied, “It would be best if you told people in the department that you’re only 27.” After that, she says, “I always wondered how much my age affected how I was perceived by my peers and supervisors, and was very careful not to mention it when I moved on to the PhD.”

One part-time professor who finished her MA in her 20s, had children, built a career, and then returned in her 40s to pursue a PhD in the area she worked in, described her grad school experience as “one long eugenics test,” with any pause for illness, or the needs of her family, seen as proof that she was unworthy to enter the academic club. The problem, as she saw it, was merely structural; the simple adaptation of allowing part-time studies would have solved it easily. However, her department was heavily invested in ideas of the “traditional” path and statistics regarding “completion rates,” admitting older graduate students only because of declining enrollment in the humanities, in order to keep admission levels high enough to offer a reasonable choice of graduate seminars intended to benefit the “real” (young) graduate students who had a shot at the diminishing number of tenure track jobs.

One man who entered his PhD program in his mid-sixties felt the eugenics test mentality quite keenly when he asked for the simple memory aid of having the extensive list of authors with him in the comprehensive exam. His supervisor agreed since the “memorization of names was not the objective of the examination.” However, the chair of the graduate committee argued that “the main purpose of the graduate program was to train teachers; those with memory problems could not be good teachers.” When the student countered with the obvious point that teachers use notes when they teach, the chair dismissed him, saying, “the younger students are here to learn a profession, not only out for fun, like you.” Notwithstanding the odd notion that graduate school is fun, this student had always loved teaching, even for a pittance. The advice from the department, however, was that “there was absolutely nothing” he could do with so “many other graduates waiting in the wings,” he was simply “too old.” His good grades, excellent thesis, and previous teaching experience meant nothing.

American R1 institutions, by contrast, are concerned not only with filling graduate seminars and completion rates, but also with the job prospects of their graduates. This circular logic may lead them not to admit older graduate students in the first place, as they know their chances of getting academic jobs on graduation are slimmer. One American professor said, “With older graduate students, it is definitely a topic of conversation, mostly oblique, when we do admissions. The bias against older assistant professors filters down to us as we have a pressure to get our graduate students placed. What happens when we put a 45-year-old out onto the market?” One newly minted PhD says she did not even bother looking for work since she assumed that she “would not be taken seriously” in her 50s.

“Toxic Combination”

One of the groups most affected by ageism in university hiring is middle-aged women. Instead of being able to take the traditional path to tenure track, many have been negotiating life circumstances — caring for children, caring for elders, working to support their families — and mostly, just for being rooted in the community in which they live rather than being nomads willing to move anywhere for a job. Ironically, this generation of women who fought for equal pay, improvements in childcare and maternity leave, and equal opportunity in the workplace are now suffering from “outdated workplace practices” ... “Of course there is age discrimination against men. But the combination of age and gender discrimination against women is of a different order of magnitude” (Martinson & Adetunji, 2012).

One professor who says, “I have never found age to be a determinant of anything important,” confesses that she has “sat on hiring committees in which older academics with excellent records were passed over ... merely because they were older.” The prejudice “is so strong,” she says, “that a young academic who has not yet finished her PhD (at, let’s say, age 28) has an edge over a PhD of 34 who has been doing sessional teaching for a few years and has actually accomplished more. The bloom goes off the rose very quickly in people’s perception. By 40, one’s ‘best before’ date has definitely passed. This is not to say that older academics are never hired, but that in order to be hired they will have had to prove themselves very special in a way [such as being the mother of Indigenous studies] that the merely ‘promising’ aspiring PhD of 28 does not have to do.”

Another professor suggested that ageism was less of an issue at her small institution. A decade ago, she reported, “we hired long-time sessional appointees for about half of our tenure-track positions. Often, these were women who had either started graduate school ‘late’ (after their children were in school), had ‘gaps’ in their careers for the same reason, or who had been unable to compete for positions in other parts of the province or country because their families were based in this area.” Their difficulties, as she saw it, were the toxic “combination of gender and age.” As experienced instructors, they “had the potential to become excellent researchers if given the opportunity. This faith,” she reports, has now been “completely justified.”

The key, however, is to provide the opportunity in the first place, and to accommodate the effects of careers pieced together from contract positions at multiple institutions that leave no room for research. “Once they have institutional support,” she says, “they flourish. However, because of their age, personnel committees may have difficulty understanding when the clock started on that part of their careers. They need advocates to assure that their productivity is assessed objectively.” This was a decade ago, she warned, so “with a virtual freeze on tenure-track hirings in the Humanities, I fully expect ageism to intensify. We already have an expanding sub-class of perpetual sessional appointees; the longer someone stays there, the less likely it is that the few available positions will be open to them.”

“Are You Still Teaching?”

The idea that academics have “best-before” dates the same way that newly minted PhDs do is also prevalent. Although students tend not to discriminate based on age because they appreciate a parental figure in the classroom, according to University of Ottawa’s Caroline Andrew, in many instances, age

discrimination comes from colleagues or from the administration itself. Often the reason for ageism from both of these sources is the same — budget cuts. As in other professions, older professors are seen as taking up space and resources that should be going towards new hires. Grad students and part-time professors may also look at the locked office door of the professor on sabbatical or reduced service with envy, thinking of the “unused” space behind it while they share offices with more than half a dozen others.

As one full professor reported,

In the thirty-plus years that I’ve taught, the institution has come increasingly to favour newly hired professors at the expense of the older professoriate. In fact, the university now brazenly practices ageism. Whether it be years of course remissions or various considerate leaves or generous funding for research and travel, etc., newly hired tenure-track faculty are given an unearned advantage. When I was hired, the understanding was that the salary trajectory was, over decades, from very low to higher. When I was hired, the regular workload was three courses per term (nowadays at most it’s 3 and 2, and even 2 and 2). When I was hired, we were expected to do every time-consuming service job going.

I’ve recently heard grumblings about the amount of money that the so-called “aging” professoriat pulls down. But the biggest change in university operating expenses regarding salaries has gone the other way — to the newly hired. And I don’t see any increase in performance — such as in publications or service — between what my greybeard colleagues did and do (including of course the blue-rinsed), and what the younger professoriate produces.

Sad to say, but we’ve reached the point where my university’s *vision* is of a fresh-faced campus where no one beyond 60 hobbles about shaming the go-ahead U and dripping cash from his or her pockets — no one, of course, but senior administrators.

The very term “senior scholar” is also problematic, just like the term “young scholar” since “senior” connotes “old” more likely than it connotes “valuable.” Ironically, in many departments the lack of respect for expertise is obvious in many interactions where “up and coming” scholars are seen to be blocked by people who “refuse to retire”; no matter that the experienced professor may be working on the largest project of their career and thus bowing out of community service in order to finish it. Nor does the push from below take into account the actual financial circumstances of the professor who “should” retire. How could it in a culture where no one dares mention money troubles or personal challenges? The herd instinct is to cut out the weakest members and leave them to the wolves; protect the young and leave the old to fend for themselves. Besides, if you cut out those older than yourself, *you* get to be the “senior scholar” or “expert” in your field. Such attitudes leave no room to consider wisdom, expertise, experience, or institutional memory as essential components of a teacher, a researcher, or a department.

Changes to academic culture may be decades too late for Olive Dickason, who passed away in 2011, but perhaps we can still learn from her example that the “third age” — when we are neither taking care of children nor being taken care of — can become our most productive academic years. And learn also from the professor who “never found age to be a determinant of anything important.”

6. The University as Social Institution

“Discrimination, violence and abuse, poverty and a lack of specific measures and services are all common threads running through the issues of older persons’ human rights. These issues have nothing to do with intrinsic vulnerability, and everything to do with disempowerment.”

*Martin, Rodríguez-Pinzón, and Brown
Human Rights of Older People*

One of the tasks assigned to this sub-committee is to recommend ways by which the university can involve itself in the international campaign for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons (CROP). In this section, we discuss the need for a global treaty, its possible content and benefits, and recommendations for involving uOttawa in the campaign.

Background to the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

Since 1948, when the UN adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), the nations of the world have created a human rights structure, at the base of which are nine legally binding international human rights treaties. They protect a range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, and the particular rights of women, children, migrant workers, racialized minorities, and persons with disabilities. Many people around the world, including a small group of uOttawa professors, have been campaigning for a tenth UN human rights treaty, one that safeguards the rights of older persons.

The campaign for an older persons’ rights instrument has been going on for some time. In 1948, Argentina proposed a binding agreement at the UN on old-age rights, but it ultimately faded away without action. In the 1990s, the Dominican Republic and the International Federation on Ageing tried twice, unsuccessfully, to build support at the UN for a binding international instrument on older persons’ rights (Sciubba, 2014).

In 2010, the UN finally created an Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, chaired by an Argentinian diplomat, to study the possibility of a treaty seriously. Its work continues. In 2014, the UN Human Rights Council asked an independent expert to look into the effectiveness of existing non-binding instruments pertaining to older persons, and to see if there is a case for a binding instrument. Her work, too, is continuing.

At this point, the campaign for a treaty has become a kind of global social movement. It has the support of many older persons’ organizations, as well as Human Rights Watch, the American Bar Association, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, and at least twenty-one UN member states, not to mention academics, politicians, medical people, and ordinary citizens.

The Need

The make-up of the world's population has changed dramatically. Between 1950 and 2010, life expectancy rose globally from 46 to 68, and is expected to reach 81 by the end of this century (UN General Assembly, 2011). All regions of the world will see an aging of their populations. The most rapid increase will take place in Africa, projected to reach 215 million people aged 60 or older by 2050, almost quadrupling its current figure. The Asia-Pacific region currently has about 59% of the world's elderly. The number of older persons in this region is projected to triple by 2050. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the percentage of persons aged 60 and over will more than double by 2050. Europe has the oldest population of all, and it will continue to have, with the proportion of older persons at about 34% in 2050 (UN Economic and Social Council, 2012).

That large numbers of older persons throughout the globe face conditions of abject destitution is beyond doubt. Indeed, older persons rank among the poorest people in the poorest countries of the world (Doron, Brown, & Somers, 2013). The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that half the older people in the world receive no pension whatsoever. Many more receive pensions that are grossly inadequate (ILO, 2014).

Gender-based discrimination at work tends to have a cumulative impact in old age, resulting in disproportionately lower incomes and pensions for women as compared to men. Older women are more likely than older men to be poor because of inequalities in employment and education and also because women on average live longer than men and thus require more savings and supports. Older women "often take on greater responsibilities for family care while managing inflexible working conditions, mandatory retirement ages and inadequate pensions and other social security benefits, which leave them, and those in their care, extremely vulnerable" (UN General Assembly, 2011, p. 4).

Not surprisingly, Ban Ki-Moon concluded, "What older persons share as a group is the experience of living within societies in which stereotyping, the attribution of lesser value, political disempowerment and economic and social disadvantage often accompany aging" (UN General Assembly, 2011, p. 11). Significantly, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, also denounced the limited and fragmented response to the plight of older persons (UN Economic and Social Council, 2012).

Exacerbating the problems of older persons are the significant gaps in international and national laws. Many countries do not have age discrimination legislation and few have constitutional prohibitions against it. The *International Bill of Rights*, consisting of the UDHR, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, does not explicitly identify age as a prohibited ground of discrimination. And existing international non-binding rights instruments have proven inadequate.

An older persons' rights treaty should be of considerable interest to Canadians. First, it would give them another layer of rights protection (assuming, of course, that an individual complaints provision is included in the treaty). In addition, states that ratify a treaty are held to account not only by NGOs but also by a dedicated UN treaty body, comprised of independent experts, which monitors compliance, and by the UN Human Rights Council, which assesses each state's human rights progress every four years. Thus, Canadian governments would be required to explain and rectify any failures to fulfil the country's treaty obligations, a requirement that could stimulate new initiatives to meet the needs of older Canadians.

Given the rapid aging of the world's and Canada's population, an older persons rights treaty should be a central element in the federal government's international human rights policy. It should be pursued with the same vigour with which the government of Canada pursued the creation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Criminal Court.

Content of a Treaty

Among legal scholars and knowledgeable observers, there is wide agreement that older persons are not adequately protected by international human rights law because explicit references to age in the core international human rights conventions are scarce. As Ban Ki-Moon has written, “there is still no dedicated international protection regime for the human rights of older persons. Existing human rights mechanisms have lacked a systematic and comprehensive approach to the specific circumstances of older men and women” (UN General Assembly, 2011, p. 19).

Exactly what might go into an older persons’ rights treaty? The answer would depend on the international negotiators. However, we can get some idea by going to the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, adopted in 2015 by the Organization of American States (OAS), which consists of all of the states in the Western hemisphere except Cuba.¹⁵ The following are some of the substantive articles contained in that convention:

- Equality and non-discrimination for reasons of age.
- The right to life and dignity in old age.
- The right to independence and autonomy.
- The right to participation and community integration.
- The right to give free and informed consent on health matters.
- The rights of older persons receiving long-term care.
- The right to privacy and intimacy.
- The right to health.
- The right to property.
- The right to housing.
- The right to a healthy environment.
- The right to accessibility and personal mobility.
- The right to special measures in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies.

There is also a right to work (Article 18) which states:

Older persons have the right to dignified and decent work and to equal opportunity and treatment on the same terms as other workers, whatever their age.

States Parties shall adopt measures to prevent labour discrimination against older persons.

¹⁵ Canada neither signed nor ratified the OAS convention.

It is prohibited to make any kind of distinction that is not based on the specific requirements of the job, in accordance with domestic laws and local conditions. The same guarantees, benefits, labor and union rights, and pay should apply to all workers in the same employment or occupation and for similar tasks and responsibilities.

States Parties shall adopt legislative, administrative, and other measures to promote formal work for older persons and to regulate the various forms of self-employment and domestic work, with a view to preventing abuse and ensuring them adequate social coverage and recognition for unremunerated work.

States Parties shall promote programs and measures that will facilitate a gradual transition into retirement, for which they may rely on the participation of organizations representing employers and workers, as well as of other interested agencies.

States Parties shall promote labor policies that take account of the needs and characteristics of older persons, with the aim of fostering workplaces that are suitable in terms of working conditions, environment, work hours, and organization of tasks.

States Parties shall encourage the design of training and knowledge-certification programs in order to promote access for older persons to more-inclusive labor markets.

As well, particularly relevant for this report, Article 20 sets out a right to education:

Older persons have the right to education, on an equal basis with other sectors of the population and without discrimination, in the modalities determined by each State Party; to participate in existing educational programs at all levels; and to share their knowledge and experience with all generations.

States Parties shall ensure effective exercise of the right to education for older persons and shall:

- a) Facilitate access for older persons to appropriate educational and training programs that provide access, inter alia, to the different levels of the education cycle, to literacy, post-literacy, technical and professional training, and to continuing education, especially for groups in situations of vulnerability.
- b) Promote the development of accessible and suitable educational programs, materials, and formats for older persons that fit their needs, preferences, skills, motivations, and cultural identities.
- c) Adopt the necessary measures to reduce and progressively eliminate barriers and obstacles to educational goods and services in rural areas.
- d) Promote education and training for older persons in the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in order to bridge the digital, generational, and geographical divide and to increase social and community integration.
- e) Design and implement active policies to eradicate illiteracy among older persons,

especially women and groups in situations of vulnerability.

- f) Foster and facilitate the active participation of older persons in both formal and non-formal educational activities.

In addition, the convention requires states to foster a positive attitude toward old age, to sensitize the public about the aging process, to avoid stereotypical language, and to promote the rights and empowerment of older persons. Importantly, too, individuals and groups may submit complaints of violations of the convention to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Benefits

If the international negotiators of an older persons' rights treaty devise a modern, progressive, comprehensive convention, the benefits could be substantial. For starters, it would make clear that age is a prohibited ground of discrimination throughout the world.

Second, an international treaty would set out the kinds of rights protection required by older persons and, in so doing, would also set out the responsibilities of states toward older persons. It may stimulate states without legislative and constitutional prohibitions against age discrimination to fill those gaps.

Third, a treaty would help to raise rights consciousness among older persons themselves. It may help to change the view that many older people may have of themselves in much the same way that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women "suggests to women that they are men's equals and entreats them to start viewing themselves in that light (Simmons, 2009, p. 141). With such a change in self-understanding will come a change in the way others, especially governments and perhaps the media, see older persons.

Fourth, an older persons' rights treaty would serve as a mobilizing and advocacy tool for older persons and their NGOs, including transnational NGOs. Among other things, it could be used in litigation to protect rights.

Finally, as Ban Ki-Moon noted, a rights convention would give older persons greater visibility and recognition nationally and internationally (UN General Assembly, 2009). To be sure, such a rights treaty would not be a magic bullet, but it would be one more mechanism that can be accessed to create a better future for older men and women.

Conclusion

A university does not exist in a vacuum. It is a social institution that influences and is influenced by the wider society. The discriminatory attitudes that may be prevalent in society will inevitably make their way into the university context and vice versa. A university cannot remain an island of ageist-free attitudes in a sea of ageism. Thus, it must be an enthusiastic partner in the larger struggle against ageism and, indeed, all forms of discrimination, not a neutral observer. Certainly, the University of Ottawa is not neutral on rights, whether they be linguistic rights, equality rights, democratic rights, or any of the rights contained in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Ontario Human*

Rights Code. For this reason, we feel justified in calling upon uOttawa to actively support the adoption of the UN Convention. Specifically, we recommend that **the new Life Research Institute seek to partner with the Human Rights Research and Education Centre, the International Longevity Centre (Canada), the Centre for International Policy Studies, and interested individuals and other uOttawa units to develop and implement a lobbying strategy for the adoption of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.**

An effective campaign strategy would require a persistent, concerted effort to persuade the government of Canada to champion the Convention at the UN and other international circles. Toward this end, we encourage the uOttawa units mentioned above to consider organizing an international conference to bring together state representatives, scholars and experts, members of civil society organizations, and interested individuals from around the world to promote UN member state support for the treaty.

7. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing analysis, we recommend that:

1. President Frémont publicly announce that uOttawa is committed to implementing the 10 principles set out by the Age-Friendly University Network plus the 11th principle, developed by our sub-committee, namely, to ensure that the university's human resource policies, procedures, and practices — including in the hiring of staff and of teaching faculty, both full time and part time — are free of ageist bias and conform to the requirements of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
2. The University should develop and expand research on aging within the University of Ottawa. This can be done, notably, by the Life Research Institute (LRI):
 - 2a. The Institute should take a broad, multi-disciplinary approach to its work, considering the desirability of partnership building between uOttawa and the community and considering the creative initiatives adopted by other centres on aging.
 - 2b. The LRI should encourage community formation among older adults by, for example, creating an advisory committee of older students, staff, faculty, and retirees, tasked with auditing uOttawa's built environment, its publications, practices and policies for age-related exclusionary features.
 - 2c. The LRI should partner with the Human Rights Research and Education Centre, the International Longevity Centre, the Centre for International Policy Studies, and interested individuals and other uOttawa units to develop and implement a lobbying strategy for the adoption of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.
3. The University should develop and expand programs of study in gerontology/aging.
 - 3a. The University should expand the current minor in gerontology towards a full, interdisciplinary, inter-faculty graduate program in gerontology.
4. The Human Rights Office, with the assistance of interested faculty members, should offer information sessions and materials to managers at all levels, students, professors, and retirees on how ageism manifests itself in various contexts, as well as on the Ontario Human Rights Commission policy on age discrimination, including the duty of employers to accommodate older employees.
5. The University should increase support to, the visibility of and collaboration with the first Université du Troisième Âge (UTA) within the National Capital Region – developed by Campus 3 and Université de Sherbrooke. The participation of the University of Ottawa (notably the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences) in the project for the creation of a Université du Troisième Âge in Outaouais (led by Campus 3 in Outaouais and the University of Sherbrooke) has been facilitated by the proximity of the institutions and their mutual complementarity with regards to the courses taught to seniors (arts, social sciences and humanities, languages and literature, etc.) Clearly, this collaboration will in no way prevent the implementation of similar projects in other universities.

6. The University should improve post-retirement benefits to optimize equity between staff and professors, and well-being for all current and former members of the university community.
7. The University should examine existing policies and procedures regarding gradual retirement.
8. The President's Office should welcome and involve uOttawa retirees in campus life
9. The University should support re-opening Centre 50+, and it should resume Personal Enrichment courses for seniors.
10. SASS should increase the visibility of its services to mature students, both undergraduate and graduate.

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Appendix 1: University Based Centres on Aging in Canada

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Simon Fraser University – Gerontology Research Centre
University of Victoria – Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health
University of British Columbia – Aging, Mobility and Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory
– Centre for Research on Personhood in Dementia
University of the Fraser Valley – Chilliwack Elder College

ALBERTA

University of Alberta – Alberta Centre on Aging
University of Calgary – Perceptual and Cognitive Aging Laboratory

SASKATCHEWAN

University of Regina – Centre on Aging and Health

MANITOBA

University of Manitoba – Centre on Aging

ONTARIO

Lakehead University – Centre for Education and Research on Aging and Health
McMaster University – Gilbrea Centre for Studies in Aging
Nipissing University – Northern Centre for Research on Aging and Communication
Ryerson University – National Institute on Ageing
Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning – Sheridan Elder Research Centre
Trent University – Trent Centre for Aging and Society
University of Ottawa – Elizabeth Bruyère Research Institute
– International Longevity Centre
– Life Research Institute
University of Toronto – Institute for Life Course and Aging
– Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Caregiver
– Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation
University of Waterloo – R. B. Schlegel Research Institute for Aging
University of Western Ontario – Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging
– Centre for Population, Aging and Health
York University – Centre on Aging

QUEBEC

McGill University – McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging
Université Laval – Institut du vieillissement et la participation sociale des aînés
– Centre d'excellence du vieillissement de Québec
Université du Montréal – Centre de Recherche Institut Universitaire de Gériatrie de Montréal
Université de Sherbrooke – Research Centre on Aging

Donald Berman Maimonides Geriatric Centre
Centre de recherche et d'expertise en g rontologie sociale (CREG S)
RUIS McGill (McGill R seau Universitaire Int gr  de Sant ) Centre of Excellence on aging and chronic disease

NEW BRUNSWICK

St. Thomas – Third Age Centre
Universit  de Moncton – Centre d' tudes du vieillissement

NOVA SCOTIA

Mount St. Vincent University – Nova Scotia Centre on Aging
– Maritime Data Centre for Aging Research and Policy Analysis

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

University of Prince Edward Island – Centre on Health and Aging