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NEWS RELEASE

Insights from South Korea: How Canada Can Learn from One of the World's Fastest Ageing Countries

Lessons and recommendations from across borders

TORONTO, July 23, 2024 — South Korea has emerged as one of the fastest ageing countries in the world. This is due to it having one of the lowest birth rates, highest life expectancies globally and two baby-boom populations that have just begun their transition to becoming older adults. By 2025, South Korea is expected to become a “super-aged” society, with over 20% of its population being older adults.

On July 1st, 2024, the South Korean government announced they will be creating a new standalone ministry to better support its various demographic issues, including those related to its rapidly ageing population and low birth rates. This comes just weeks after the President of South Korea declared a national demographic emergency.

In [Caring for an Ageing Korea](#), a new report in the *Ageing Beyond Borders Series* from the National Institute on Ageing (NIA), the white paper provides an in-depth analysis of South Korea's comprehensive approach to supporting its rapidly ageing population.

“In response to its seismic demographic shifts, South Korea has made managing both the challenges and opportunities of its rapidly ageing population a national priority,” says Arushan Arulnamby, Policy Analyst, of the NIA.

With a series of five-year national plans since South Korea implemented its Framework Act on Low Birth Rate in an Aging Society in 2005, it has developed numerous policies and programs for its ageing population. These include a national long-term care insurance (LTCI) program that helps cover the cost of long-term care (LTC) services, along with national dementia management plans and health supports for older adults.

“When we analyze the changes a rapidly ageing country such as South Korea has made to its health and social systems it offers us an invaluable opportunity to learn from other approaches and experiences,” says Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research, of the NIA. “As South Korea transitions to soon become a “super-aged” society, it will be

important to continue to understand how it adapts and adopts new strategies to meet the evolving needs of its ageing population.”

Some of the more complex social problems faced by older Koreans include high poverty and suicide rates, with research showing that financial difficulties are one of the main motivations for pursuing suicide in this population group. Over the years, South Korea has been increasingly focused on enhancing various financial-security initiatives like the Basic Pension, as well as the level of support it provides to both working-age and older Koreans through national employment initiatives like its Senior Employment Program.

In Canada, with its universal health care and national financial-security initiatives, many sectors have varying services and levels of care across the country. Currently, there exists no public long term care insurance (LTCI) programs or employment initiatives for older adults, while its dementia strategies remain largely limited as well.

"By examining new approaches to long-term care, dementia management, and financial security for older adults, we can better understand and implement effective strategies to support our own ageing population," says Alyssa Brierley, Executive Director of the NIA. "This cross-border learning presented in our Ageing Beyond Borders series is valuable as we navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by our own demographic shifts."

About The National Institute on Ageing

The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) improves the lives of older adults and the systems that support them by convening stakeholders, conducting research, advancing policy solutions and practice innovations, sharing information and shifting attitudes. Our vision is a Canada where older adults feel valued, included, supported, and better prepared to age with confidence.

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