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Thank you for contacting us. The NDP believes that Manitoba seniors helped build this province, and as such they deserve to live with dignity and know that the services they count on are there for them. We are committed to making Manitoba a better place to live for our seniors and ensure that they can lead healthy, active lives right in their home communities. Please see responses to your concerns below.

1. Affordability

We have made a number of changes to make life more affordable for our seniors. In the most recent provincial budget we committed to increase the seniors maximum education property tax credit. If re-elected, we will eliminate the seniors' education property tax altogether. This will save seniors a total of \$35 million every year.

Pensioners also save \$30 million annually in Manitoba income taxes through pension income splitting and a \$1,000 private pension income exemption.

Many Manitoban seniors also look to Pharmacare to keep the costs of their prescription medication manageable. Our program continues to be among the best in the country. Its universality and protection against catastrophic drug costs make it a model in the nation.

In 2008 we also introduced a new Caregiver Tax Credit to provide supports for families to help a loved one in need of care live with dignity and as much independence as possible. The tax credit was expanded to \$1,275 annually in our last budget. To compliment this measure we have also introduced Canada's first Caregiver Recognition Act aimed at recognizing both the value of caregiver contributions as well as the need to work with caregivers to provide a network of supports.

2. Access to services (such as housing)

With an aging population that is living longer, we know how important it is to offer supports to seniors who want to live safely in their own homes, as well as expanding other living options such as personal-care homes and supportive housing. Since 1999 on expanding home care, adding supportive housing and increasing the number of personal care home beds. We strongly oppose privatizing home care, cutting home care services, or introducing home care user fees – all initiatives the Conservatives experimented with during the 1990s.

This February we launched a renewed long-term care plan that will invest \$16 million to provide more home-care supports, to help seniors regain and maintain their independence following surgery or injury, and to provide a new income-protection benefit to make supportive housing an affordable alternative to PCH placement for low-income seniors.

We will also invest \$200 million to add hundreds of new personal-care home beds over the next several years. This is in addition to a new 80-bed PCH currently under construction in south Winnipeg and 100 new beds currently being developed in Morden.

This plan builds on investments in long-term care since 1999 that have resulted in more than 400 additional PCH beds, over 500 new supportive housing units, and 2,900 group living spaces to provide a range of services to seniors who do not require the medical care that would be provided in a personal-care home.

We are also expanding seniors housing options through our ambitious Homeworks strategy. Two years into the plan we have added more than 700 affordable housing units, assisted over 600 households to access rent-geared-to-income housing, and provided funding for over 800 homeowners, seniors, people living with disabilities and renters to renovate their homes. If re-elected we will work with the private sector to create thousands of affordable private sector rental housing units across the province including downtown Winnipeg.

This Spring the province announced a new Tenant Protection package to better protect tenants from excessive rent increases and uncontrolled condo conversions. As part of this package we are also increasing RentAid, a monthly benefit to help low income seniors, families, and persons with disabilities to pay their rent.

We have also committed to working with the Alzheimer Society to renew the provincial Alzheimer's strategy and to fund their First Link program to connect individuals and families affected by dementia with services and support as soon as possible after diagnosis.

More generally, we have launched the 'Age Friendly Manitoba' initiative, which has expanded to 72 communities since it was launched in 2008, to work with local municipalities to improve services that increase senior's independence, access to health, and have greater social and physical interactions. Our goal is to become the most age-friendly province in Canada.

3. Communication and Education (including addressing ageism)

No one of any age should ever suffer mistreatment or neglect. We understand that increasing awareness and education is a major part of addressing ageism and elder abuse. In 2002 we launched a Provincial Elder Abuse Strategy, including \$200,000 annually, aimed at working with partners to prevent elder abuse and to increase awareness about this important issue.

A number of programs have been put in place under this strategy. For example, we have developed Safe Suite, operated by Age & Opportunity, to provide temporary housing for older adults who are experiencing abuse. As of March 1st the toll-free provincewide Seniors Abuse Line has been available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide information about elder abuse, to make referrals to relevant agencies, and to offer full telephone counseling from highly trained counsellors.

We know that Manitobans, particularly senior citizens, need greater protections within the marketplace. For that reason we have launched an aggressive consumer protection strategy which includes a code of ethics for funeral directors, legislation to protect against negative option billing, and new measures to fight identity theft.

We have also strengthened penalties for those who abuse seniors. Earlier this year the government introduced amendments to the Vulnerable Persons Living with a Disability Act, which included creating a duty to report abuse or neglect and an increase in penalties related to offences under the Act. We are also creating a new adult abuse registry, a first of its kind in Canada, which will provide protection by preventing individuals who abuse or neglect vulnerable people from working with them in the future.