

# Investment needed

## Empower healthier communities for Chinese Ontarians



### Chinese population is growing, aging and its health is declining

As of 2016, 754,550 Ontarians identified as Chinese, making up about 5.6% of Ontario's overall population, the second largest visible minority group. Additionally, between 2011-2016 the number of people that speak a Chinese language as their mother tongue has increased by **19.25%**, and the number of Mandarin speakers specifically has increased by nearly **140%**, while Ontario's overall population only increased by 4.60%.

Similar to the rest of the province, Ontario's Chinese population is also aging. In Toronto specifically, Chinese seniors aged 65+ are the **third largest senior group** compared with other ethno-cultural groups.

Language and cultural barriers can present many challenges for immigrants and immigrant seniors who attempt to access the health care system. For immigrants that don't speak English or French, their health can decline at a much faster rate compared to those fluent in one of Canada's official languages.

The self-reported decline in health by immigrants from China is **2 times** the rate reported by immigrants from North America and Oceania.

In part, this is because people who do not speak English or French may struggle to understand their health care professionals - their instructions, risk of treatment, measures for prevention, and family involvement.

When people don't have access to preventative or primary care, it can lead to unnecessary emergency room visits and delayed treatment. Not only does this result in worse health outcomes, but it is also costly to our health care system overall. Just one night at the hospital costs \$665.

Ontario's overall senior population is projected to nearly double over the next 25 years:

from **2.3** million in **2016**  
to **4.6** million by **2041**.



### Excessively long wait times and high rates of involuntary institutionalization

In addition to suffering from the **poorest self-reported mental health**, Chinese Ontarians are experiencing greater barriers to accessing mental health services compared to other groups. Among Chinese Ontarians that self-report fair or poor mental health, only **19.8%** seek help from a mental health professional compared to **50.8%** of white Ontarians.

Reducing stigma and augmenting culturally sensitive mental health services could help reach patients sooner and prevent involuntary institutionalization. **67%** of Chinese patients that go to the ER for mental health issues end up being involuntarily admitted compared to **46%** of general population patients.

**5** months

on average for a patient to access psychiatric care in Ontario. The average wait time to see a psychiatrist who speaks Cantonese or Mandarin is

**9** to **12** months.

East Asian youth are also struggling with mental health issues. According to the Toronto District School Board, East Asian students have a higher rate of experiencing low emotional well-being, including lower self-esteem, self-image, confidence and hopefulness, as well as higher rates of stress, sadness and loneliness compared to other groups.



# Hidden poverty in Chinese communities impacts health

## 22.2%

of Chinese Ontarians are living below the Low-Income Measure compared to the provincial average of

## 14.4%

Many Chinese Ontarians struggle with social isolation and they have the **weakest sense of belonging** to their local community compared to other ethnic groups. In addition, there are many Chinese Ontarians that hide the impacts that living in poverty is having on them due to cultural stigma.

More than 60% of health outcomes are determined by social and environmental factors such as income, education, working conditions, housing, social support, safety, and the physical environment we live in. Of all those factors, poverty is the leading cause of poor health and health inequities.

Chinese Ontarians are the **second largest** ethno-racial community with individuals living on low incomes across Ontario.

## Recommendations

Based on the evidence available, the Ontario Chinese Health Coalition recommends action in the following areas to ensure a brighter future for Chinese Ontarians:



Build a system that all Ontarians can access and break down language barriers.

Invest in ethno-cultural specific health and mental health services and cultural competency training programs for all health care professionals to ensure our health system meets the needs of Ontario's ever-changing population.



Invest in multi-lingual and culturally specific public awareness campaigns to improve understanding of available services covered under OHIP and reduce stigma.

Make it easier for all patients to navigate the health care system & improve integration of services so that patient care is cohesive from primary care provider to hospital to the patient's home.



Invest in poverty-reduction measures that will address the impacts of poverty on health and mental health, and enable low-income Ontarians to overcome barriers to accessing needed health care and mental health services.

Established in 2010, Ontario Chinese Health Coalition works in collaboration with over 30 member agencies, including Alzheimer Society of Toronto, Canadian Chinese Medical Doctor Society, Canadian Chinese Youth Athletics Association, Canadian Liver Foundation, Carefirst Seniors & Community Services Association, CATIE (Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C Information), Centre for Immigrant and Community Services, Chinese Canadian Nurses' Association of Ontario, Chinese Family Services of Ontario, Chinese Mental Health Network, First Chinese Senior Association of Vaughan, Harmony Hall Centre for Seniors, Hong Fook Mental Health Association, Joy Beyond Vision Community (JBVC), Mon Sheong Foundation, Mount Sinai Hospital Wellness Centre, S.E.A.S. Centre, Senior Persons Living Connected (SPLC), South East Toronto Stroke Network, St. Michael's Hospital, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, The Cross-Cultural Community Services Association, The Kidney Foundation of Canada - Ontario Branch, The Lung Association, Toronto Public Health, Vision Youth, Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, and York Region Community and Health Services.



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