



A NEW VISION OF AGING FOR CANADA

January 31, 2013

The Honourable Minister Gail Shea
Minister of National Revenue
7th Floor, 555 MacKenzie Avenue
Ottawa ON K1A 0L5

Dear Minister Shea,

CARP has received many complaints about the CRA's decision to cease mailing paper income-tax forms. CARP members have expressed concern that the recent, little announced changes to tax filing policy will seriously disadvantage Canadians, including seniors, who do not have internet access or are unable or uncomfortable filing taxes online. Canadians who live in remote or rural areas will also be affected by these changes, as access to rural post offices to pick up paper forms is often limited.

Almost ten million Canadians used paper tax returns in 2012, according to the CRA which also said that 1.3 million paper forms were not used. But that still leaves over 8 million Canadians – obviously not all are seniors - faced with searching out the paper forms if they still want them. At least the media coverage of the issue has alerted many more Canadians to the change but there is no assurance that people will be able to get the forms readily in time.

There is a growing acceptance of internet use for personal and financial matters by all Canadians, including seniors, but the wholesale changeover to online tax filing with little notice or time to prepare is provoking unnecessary anxiety. Canadians of all ages have legitimate concerns about private digital data being lost, as demonstrated in November 2012 when HRSDC lost the personal information of 600,000 Canadians.

The lack of sufficient advance notice of the changes and the lack of credible alternatives to mailed paper forms may also cause many Canadians to miss the tax deadline, thereby incurring penalties and foregoing eligibility for a number of government benefits, including the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

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Cancelling the Telefile option which was relied upon by people of very modest means will also disrupt the lives of the very people who need less red tape not more. This group – an estimated 300,000 Canadians - clearly needs an accessible method of fulfilling their obligation to file a tax return and to access the tax credits and refunds to which they are entitled.

CARP is asking the CRA to remedy the situation by now mailing tax returns to the taxpayers who used paper forms last year and giving them a clear option to choose a mailed form for the next year. We look forward to receiving your response which we can share with our members before this tax season is over. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan Eng,
Vice President, Advocacy

cc: Andrew Treusch, Commissioner of Revenue Canada
The Honourable Minister Alice Wong, Minister for Seniors

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