

The Newfoundland and Labrador Coalition of Seniors', Pensioners' and Retirees' Associations (NL Seniors' Coalition) is an umbrella title for an alliance of fourteen different seniors' and retirees' organizations that have agreed to work collaboratively with a unified voice to speak out against all actions that are deemed to have a negative impact on the quality of life of its members and their families. This voice of unity is key in advocating on matters that challenge the well-being and quality of life of pensioners, retirees and seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to this end, the Coalition advances the following as **"KEY ISSUES"** requiring direct response and action from the provincial political parties seeking election on February 13, 2021.

HEALTH CARE:

Aging in Place or ***Aging at Home*** has become a cliché of late espoused by those in political office to indicate their understanding, or lack thereof, of this policy direction, often with the direct intent to persuade the senior population that this is the path their government is on, or will be on if elected. However, reality is far from this annunciation. The Health Care system in Newfoundland and Labrador is in a mess, it needs a dramatic overhaul, it is costing more dollars per person per capita than anywhere else in Canada, and our health outcomes are nothing short of shameful. And, every time there is a news flash about health care and seniors it is all glory about building new and modern full service institutions.

The NL health care system is built around an acute care model, as all community based health services, at home care, and acute care are invariably linked to the Regional Health Authorities, where first and foremost focus is on a hospital care model.

- A. If there is true commitment to an ***Aging in Place*** model then this picture needs to change. The Coalition asks:
1. That a no cost vaccinations program be instituted that targets illnesses that impact seniors' healthy living (flu, covid, pneumonia, shingles);
 2. That provision be made for timely and affordable access to cognitive testing, increased funding for adult day care, and support for at home dementia care;
 3. For increased access to vision, auditory, and dental care, including dental care for residents of long term care;
 4. Review and increase the ceilings for home care and home improvement services that would have a positive impact on older persons to age in place;
 5. That action be taken to resolve the lack of family doctors in the Province. The NL Medical Association has stated that 90,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are without a family doctor. There can be no success with any **Aging in Place** direction unless there is an accompaniment of community based medical services;
 6. That there be changes to the medicare billing system to enable other community based medical care providers to direct bill; and
 7. That all political parties commit to implementing the recommendations of the Health Accord Task Force with a focused government policy direction of **Aging in Place**.
- B. In September of 2019, the Seniors' Advocate released her report "Long May Your Big Jib Draw: Setting Sail" and called for a paradigm shift in how seniors care is directed, managed, supported, and implemented in this Province. What and where is the commitment to action the recommendations of this Report?

- C. In July of 2016, the report of Deloitte *“Provincial Home Support Program Review”* was filed with the Government and subsequently a decision was taken to action all of the recommendations. In 2020, this Coalition filed multiple recommendations for change to a draft revision of the Personal Care Home Standards and are still waiting to review revisions to the Long term Care Standards. Will the Government (your Government) commit to implementing these recommended revisions and accelerating the review and implementation of revised standards of care for long term care?
- D. Will your Government, if elected, push the Federal Government to establish a National Seniors’ Strategy? The Coalition has been calling for such a strategy now for well over five (5) years that would guide and direct how seniors’ care is provided in this country and then universally across the Provinces. What is your party’s commitment to this?

ELECTRICITY COSTS:

- E. The impending increase in the cost of heat and light still remains a major worry for seniors and other persons on fixed incomes. What is (or will be) the plan to set electricity rates at \$0.13 per kilowatt hour as has been promised?

COST OF GOODS:

- F. It has been stated that Government is keeping its eye on the cost of normal everyday goods, including food, and there is no evidence to suggest any price gouging. However, one only needs to go to the supermarket to see that prices are creeping up daily. Items that cost \$1.69 or even 2 for \$9.00 and now \$2.29 or 2 for \$10.00.

In addition, the quantity of products has become smaller while the price has increased. What action will you direct to control the cost of every day essential goods for the consumer?

- G. In addition to controlling the cost of essential goods, the Coalition asks that changes to the provincial tax brackets and increases in non-refundable tax credits, including pension non-refundable tax credits for older persons be implemented so that more income can be retained for personal living and thus redirected into the provincial economy.

CONCLUSION:

The NL Health Accord Task Force has identified that the population demographic will dramatically shift within the next twenty (20) years to a high proportion of seniors and a low proportion of children, more so than it has in the previous fifty (50) years. This will require a major rethinking and reframing of all services within our Province that not only incorporate means for older persons to contribute with value and positively to their society but that equally values those who are frail and vulnerable and makes appropriate accommodation for them.

The issues identified by the Coalition are a framework for Aging in Place and for valuing, with little cost but bravery in decision direction, the older citizenship of Newfoundland and Labrador. If we are to be vital as a Province, we need to recognize our changing population demographic and instead of promoting ageism, celebrate it with action. The Coalition is asking that the above demands be given urgent address by those seeking political leadership within our Province.