

The Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador and our Liberal Government recognizes the immense contributions seniors have made and continue to make to our province. Seniors deserve respect and high quality public services. We are committed to working together to address issues of importance to seniors.

Health care is a top priority for our Liberal Government. Both our Premier and Minister of Health and Community Services are doctors and wholeheartedly agree in the importance of aging in place and accessible health care services. Premier Furey has established Health Accord NL – a taskforce to reimagine the health care system in order to best deliver services to meet the needs of people, and it will focus on the social determinants of health, or the social and economic factors that influence people’s health, and will look at the balance between community based and hospital based care.

The Accord will be developed in consultation with all stakeholders, prioritizing engagement with various groups including seniors. We are excited about the process that is unfolding and its goals.

As your organization is aware, our Liberal Government is actively recruiting on an ongoing basis to try and bring more doctors to the province. We are also working to keep graduating doctors from Memorial University in our province. We will continue to expand the scopes of health care professionals to make healthcare more accessible, and we are committed to integrated team based care, which will have significant impacts for people living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

We recognize that the high cost of prescription drugs is a challenge for some seniors. Our 65+ Prescription Drug Program provides coverage of eligible prescription drugs to residents 65 years of age and older who receive Old Age Security Benefits (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), with beneficiaries responsible for payment of the dispensing fee up to a maximum of \$6. Our Liberal Government continues to advocate for a national pharmacare strategy and is working with our counterparts across the country and with the Federal Government on this front.

With regard to your question relating to the recommendations contained in the Seniors Advocate Report “Long may your big jib draw: Setting Sail” we can report that a working group has been established, co-led by the Department of Health and CSSD. The working group also includes the Seniors’ Advocate. Their mandate is to review the report and the recommendations and will be reporting back to government. We are proud that a Liberal Government established an independent Seniors’ Advocate – the third of its kind in the

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country. We value the important role that the Seniors' Advocate plays in the lives of seniors, families, and those who support them, and we appreciate the work of Dr. Brake and her staff in raising issues of importance to seniors in our province.

The implementation of recommendations contained in the Deloitte report, "Provincial Home Support Program Review" is an ongoing initiative, and our Liberal Government remains committed to improving the standards for long term care in our province.

We are also pleased to advocate to the federal government on the creation of a federal seniors strategy.

Electricity Costs

Our entire population is concerned that the Muskrat Falls Development will lead to unaffordable rates, and we understand that this is of particular worry to seniors and those on fixed incomes. Our Liberal Government has committed to working with Ottawa and other stakeholders on the development of a rate mitigation plan that would see electricity rates held stable. Our goal is to keep the rate at 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour. I'm happy to report that our positive relationship with the Trudeau Administration is paying dividends on this file. The recent deferral of \$844 Million by the Federal Government is an example. We look forward to continuing our work in this area and to reporting on a successful plan development in the coming months.

Costs of Goods and Services

We are working to double our food self sufficiency as transporting food to the province increased the cost of goods and services. Since 2018, our government has invested over \$250,000 to establish and support over 150 community gardens throughout the province and we intend to expand that highly popular program even more in the years ahead.

We provided over \$575,000 at the beginning of the lockdown to get food to people who were unable to access food, and we expanded our 811 line in partnership with Food First, the Jimmy Pratt Foundation, SeniorsNL and the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for the Deaf to connect people with food resources.

Our Liberal Government provides over \$1M annually to the Kids Eat Smart Foundation and over \$100,000 to the School Lunch Association.

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We are committed to a renewed 10-year poverty reduction strategy in consultation with community-partners to improve approaches to current realities. Fundamental to reducing and preventing poverty is understanding and addressing barriers to employment and other community engagement.

Retention of Personal Income

Making changes to the provincial income tax brackets and increasing non-refundable tax credits including pension non-refundable tax credits for older persons is an idea we are interested in exploring. This would require a detailed tax analysis and a commitment from our federal partners to be involved. Both levels of government have a role to play in our progressive tax system so such moves could not be considered in isolation. We are always open to engaging on ideas that will help improve the status of seniors in our province.