

Sharron Callahan
Chair, NL Seniors' Coalition
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Dear Ms. Callahan,

Thank you for your correspondence and for giving me this opportunity to speak to the issues you have outlined. I appreciate the opportunity to speak directly to seniors, pensioners, and retirees. While traveling throughout this province, I have spoken to a great number of seniors, pensioners, and retirees. The concerns which you have listed in your letter are the same concerns I am hearing across this province.

A: Aging in Place

A PC Government will ensure seniors can stay in their own homes and own communities as long as possible, providing home and community supports in every region. We want to work with seniors to give them the option to stay in their homes. This means providing the necessary supports, including health care supports and social supports.

To help support seniors we will implement preventative health care. We want to help our seniors live healthy active lives. This means ensuring seniors have access to primary health care teams and the medical services they need.

A PC government will explore the implementation of a no cost vaccination program targeted for seniors. Preventing seniors from influenza, pneumonia, shingles, and other preventive illnesses can help seniors live healthier lives and prevent future medical visits.

We will also review the at home care model and associated supports. We will work with the Seniors Advocate, advocacy groups, and seniors themselves to determine what supports are needed and how to best deliver programming. We will strive to develop age-friendly communities.

In 2016, the Liberal government reduced access to dental care for low-income adults. A PC Government will right this wrong by increasing the availability of dental coverage for seniors and other low-income adults.

Recognizing that some 90,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do not have access to a family doctor, a PC Government will introduce a health care team model to facilitate access to family doctors and other care providers. This delivery model will aid the development of primary health care teams of Nurse Practitioners and Registered Nurses as well as Physicians, Physiotherapists, Pharmacists, Occupational Therapists and Dieticians. Health care teams will offer after-hour and weekend clinics as well as virtual care. This will ensure that seniors can receive continuous primary health care close to home. We will make changes to the medical fee structures so they are flexible enough to cover innovative arrangements for service delivery by multidisciplinary health care teams.

We look forward to reviewing the recommendations of the Health Accord Task Force. We will take their recommendations seriously. We agree with Dr. Pat Parfrey and Sr. Elizabeth Davis when they publicly challenged the Liberal government statements about hospital closures being on the table. We will not accept a single recommendation of the Liberal government without having an outcomes analysis, not just a cost-savings analysis.

B: 2019 Seniors' Advocate Report "Long May Your Big Jib Draw: Selling Sail"

A PC Government will work with the Seniors' Advocate on strategies to protect vulnerable seniors by addressing violence, abuse, exploitation, and consumer protection, particularly in relation to marketing fraud.

If I am elected Premier on February 13th, I will direct a team of Ministers to work with the Seniors' Advocate to ensure all of the recommendations in this report are implemented. I will ask them to report after six months on their progress. I will also ask the Seniors' Advocate to follow up with a report on our government's progress.

C: Provincial Home Support Program Review

If I am elected Premier, I would be interested in meeting with the Coalition to review your recommendations. I would like to hear directly from you as to what changes you would like made and to hear the evidence and reasoning behind each request.

I am committed to ensuring that our Personal Care Homes and Long-Term Care Facilities are safe and welcoming homes for our seniors who reside in them.

A PC Government will conduct a review of the current availability of long-term care homes to ensure there are adequate facilities in place to meet the needs of the residents of the province. In light of the findings, we will create a 10-year long-term care plan ensuring that needs are met into the future. A PC Government will conduct a staffing level review of all nursing homes to ensure the appropriate number of health professionals is available to care for residents. This review will be informed by our COVID-19 review and the findings of other jurisdictions.

A PC Government will reverse the decision of the Liberals that restricts seniors' access to personal care homes. We will ensure the physical and mental health of seniors is considered when assessing applications.

A PC Government will be committed to ensuring that the seniors of our province are cared for with dignity and respect and that their right to choose their care in their senior years is adhered to. Personal Care Homes provide quality care to the seniors of our province and result in excellent health care outcomes for our ageing population. We therefore pledge to ensure seniors can exercise their right to choose the care they want and we will consider an increase to the Personal Care Home Subsidy rate.

D: National Seniors' Strategy

I would be pleased to join the Coalition's call for a National Seniors' Strategy.

If I am elected Premier, I would be pleased to lobby other Premiers and the Prime Minister to join our efforts.

E: Electricity Costs

After years of Liberal mismanagement, a PC Government will get the Muskrat Falls development project back on track. As part of our negotiations with Ottawa, a PC Government will fight for a rate mitigation plan that keeps electricity rates stable, predictable, and affordable.

We will ensure that electricity rates remain stable, predictable, and affordable by being a tough negotiator and demanding the federal government take an equity stake in the Muskrat Falls development project. The federal government has signed on as our partner in this project, they must also help with rate mitigation.

We will be aggressive and positive in marketing surplus energy, and use the revenue to mitigate rates. We will also use all options available, including electrification, conservation and demand management, to ensure the people of the province get the best value from the electricity we produce. This will lead to more affordable electricity rates for us all.

F: Cost of Goods

Price gouging is a concern for me. I too have noticed that prices have gone up while the quantity or size of the item has decreased. There are several strategies which I will use to stabilize the price of food and other goods.

First of all, I would work to get the Come By Chance Oil Refinery back into production. The closure of Come By Chance has been a contributing factor to the increase of gasoline price. As the gasoline price has increased so too has the cost of goods transported by truck. It is my hope that by resuming production, we can reverse these negative impacts.

Secondly, I would work with local businesses to lower their operational costs and thus the cost of their products. This would be specifically helpful in lowering the cost of local food products. I will support farmers and the agriculture industry to produce more food and make it available for local consumption.

Additionally, I will work with the Seniors' Advocate to investigate price gouging. I will empower the Advocate to propose and implement solutions as they see fit.

G: Taxation

I believe firmly that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians needs more people paying less tax, not less people paying more tax. I believe that I can grow our economy and create jobs. This will result in more tax payers, which means we can then take a little bit of the tax burden off each and every tax payer. A PC Government will do a cost/benefit analysis of all taxes and fees and eliminate any that are ineffective. I hope that the Coalition will be a part of this analysis.

Conclusion

Thank you again for your correspondence and for this opportunity to outline some of my policy tenets. I believe in working together. I also believe in working with those who are impacted by changes to programs, policy, and services. Please know that I am always open to hearing from you and working with you to make our province a better place to live for our seniors, retirees, and pensioners.

Sincerely,
Ches Crosbie
Leader
Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador