

Meeting with Honourable John Abbott, Minister CSSD

December 13, 2021 @ 9:00 AM

Topics for Discussion:

Introduce Coalition Members.

As we discussed at our meeting on May 12, 2021, we would like to review with you the areas in your Mandate Letter that are particularly focused on the matters that have an impact on Seniors. These are:

- Strengthening relationships with organizations (in our instance, a Seniors & Pensioners' advocacy association);
- Leading a review of existing government measures to address poverty, including housing and food insecurity and develop a renewed poverty reduction strategy;
- Working with your colleagues, develop an intergenerational program guide to increase interaction between youth and seniors;
- Address issues important to seniors, in particular the issues identified by the Seniors' Advocate;
- Finalize the review of the Adult Protection Act;
- Promote Age Friendly Communities Program;
- Working with the Minister of H & CS, reinvest identified savings into areas of healthcare that will improve the social determinants of health and wellness.

First off, we would like to compliment you on your outreach and connections to various groups that are stakeholders in the issues impacting seniors. This is greatly appreciated and we trust this approach to community engagement will continue.

In particular, our questions are:

1. **Poverty Reduction Strategy:** The Last Poverty Reduction Strategy only addressed seniors in the 55-64 age cohort and is nearly 20 years out of date, except for an update in 2014. What is happening on this work? Will there be opportunity for stakeholder engagement? What is the timeline on

delivery of a revised strategy? On a related note, we are very concerned and our organizations have heard from many people about the overwhelming increases in food prices and other goods. This is becoming more and more difficult for our older persons to manage. There is nothing more disheartening than being at a supermarket and seeing older persons put back food items because of the exorbitant cost. Seniors' poverty is a tragedy in this Province and this country. Where is this on the agenda of the Province and what remedial and long term steps might the Government be considering to offset the high rate of inflation?

2. **Position of Seniors' Advocate.** What is being done with the Report filed by Dr. Brake (Long My Your Big Jib Draw)? What is happening with the recruitment for this position that is now vacant for six (6) months. This Coalition has two (2) asks:
 - A. that you act bravely and with conviction on the recommendations of the Seniors Advocate, and push your colleagues and bureaucracy to move quickly on change that will achieve on directions already set.
 - B. That the Seniors' Advocate position be filled as quickly as possible, as the fear is a delayed hire will jeopardize the security of the position.
3. **Adult Protection Act.** We compliment you, Minister, on the swift passage of Bill 40. Are you able to advise the timeline for the preparation of the Regulations to support the Adult Protection Act?

We are curious about the intersection of the Adult Protection Act 2021 with the Criminal Code and if there has been any additional information you can share on the work charged to the Federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to strengthen Canada's approach to elder abuse, including to:

- a. Create a national definition of elder abuse;
- b. Invest in better data collection and law enforcement related to elder abuse; and
- c. Establish new offences and penalties in the *Criminal Code* related to elder abuse.

4. **Promoting Age Friendly Communities.** This is a very commonly used phrase these days and it seems to appear in a lot of public messaging at different levels of Government. We are wondering if your Department is developing a framework for communities to be recognized as “age-friendly”, what the criteria would be for such recognition, would there be annual reporting, and what is being considered as a sustaining relationship to Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador through the Minister, as that portfolio was not named as a participant in this Age Friendly Communities Program. Any direction to establish an age friendly program must have as a precept an age friendly lens on all municipal decision making, hence the connection the Municipalities NL.

5. **Building a Relationship with Federal Minister of Seniors.** This Coalition is particularly concerned about:

- **National Seniors Strategy:** The Coalition continues to be disappointed that there is no commitment federally to such a Strategy. Right now, we are still waiting for the Federal Mandate Letters to be released but we are hoping that such a strategy might be forthcoming with the new Minister and that it would include cross-country stakeholder engagement. Have you had an opportunity to engage with the Minister for Seniors and what might you be able to share as to her mandated work?

Thank you for your time this morning, Minister Abbott.

Best wishes with the business of the people in the House of Assembly and fulfilling your Departmental mandate. We welcome all opportunities to provide input on provincial directions impacting older persons and to offer the Coalition as a “sounding board” before directions are taken that might not be in best interest.