

**Coalition Meeting
NAPE Classroom
9:30AM, August 17, 2022**

Sharron Callahan, the Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all back after the protracted delay of face-to-face meetings because of COVID. She thanked Don Byrne who had arranged the site for this meeting.

Sharron informed the group that Don Byrne was unable to attend and sent his regrets.

In attendance Sharron Callahan, Jon Soper, Mike Siscoe, Winston Fiander, Elaine Hutchings, Sharon Penney, Ann Marie Cleary, Bob Howard, Maurice Brewster, Ralph Morris, Susan Walsh and Tanya Billiard.

The Chair then extended a formal welcome to Susan Walsh, the Seniors Advocate and Tanya Billiard. She then facilitated a round table introduction where each representative gave a brief synopsis of their member organization.

Susan Walsh informed the group that she came into her current position via a social work position. She has a history with mental health programming at the Waterford hospital. She has experience with Policy Analysis, Program Development and has held a variety of management positions.

Tanya Billiard also comes to her current position through Social Work. She began her career with Child Protection and since 2019 has been with the Seniors Advocate office.

Ms. Walsh outlined her plans for the office of the Seniors Advocate and spoke of strategies going forward. She indicated that she is looking forward to hearing from seniors' groups, individual seniors, caregivers, Indigenous Seniors, 50 + groups and other like-minded groups as she fulfills her mandate. The plan is to conduct both in person and virtual sessions as she seeks consensus on the issues that affect seniors. The hope is that the recommendations from the engagement sessions will be publicly available this time next year. She shared that from her interactions with seniors and caregivers she has identified the following as priorities as far as seniors are concerned.

- 1) Housing needs,
- 2) Rising cost of living,
- 3) Review of the transition of the health care system,
- 4) Homelessness,
- 5) 5) Dental, Vision and Hearing problems.

She made a commitment to review the recommendations and associated actions regarding ageing in place. In addition, she plans to address 65+ workers as it relates to paying into pensions, CPP, and health plans as it relates to human rights.

Ms. Walsh ended her presentation by complimenting the Coalition on their advocacy work. She then asked for input from the groups present.

Sharon Callahan informed the Advocate that the Coalition believes that the establishment of a National Seniors Strategy is of the utmost importance. As seniors we are also concerned about Pharmacare, more particularly the delay in the implementation of the program as the mandate

letters to the Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors seems to diminish the universality component. We are pleased to note that a pilot study will be conducted on PEI.

We need a national focus and direction on healthcare in general with a specific orientation to dental care and overall oral care.

The Coalition agrees with ageing in place but we are not clear about the funding for this direction. We are unsure where the money is paid or even how to access such monies.

Financial security remains our priority: furthermore, we believe that changes need to be made to protect pension plans in cases of companies going bankrupt and we are further concerned about changes to the RIFF rules.

Ralph Morris indicated nursing home standards are not being adhered to and the system of inspections is not good. An analysis of the website would indicate that the reporting is not good nor complete. It leads us to believe inspections are not being done.

We feel that the calculation of childcare is not being taken into account properly when CPP is being calculated for women who decided to stay at home with their children. If a woman entered the workforce, they could calculate nine years of stay-at-home time, when the children were small, in their CPP payment calculations. This is not a universal calculation and women who did not enter the workforce but raise children are being disadvantaged. It seems that if you did not do paid work, there is no recognition for this in the CPP program and those women are disadvantaged in their retirement years. In effect this is creating a two-tier system of seniors those with credit for child rearing years while working and those without who did not work outside the home.

Sharron indicated that the Building Accessibilities Act is under review and there are simple changes that could be done cheaply at the time of construction that would make homes accessible for into the future. For example, the enlargement of doorways to 36 inches instead of the current 32 inches or the installation of levered door knobs rather than the standard round ones would make a huge impact on seniors' lives. Ms. Walsh indicated that this review has been completed.

Sharon Penney relayed that Compliance Packaging (Blister Packaging) while a good method of helping seniors keep their medications straight and is an aide to ensure that medications are taken on time and in the correct dosages is an expensive way to get your drugs. Compliance Packages are only available in 28-day supplies, yet prescriptions are written for one month. This necessitates those seniors using Compliance Packaging would need one or two extra prescriptions per year at an extra cost. The cost is dependent on the number of prescriptions a senior has.

Elaine Hutchings has found that compliance packaging is only available in one month supplies not the normal 90-day supply that customers can get if the drugs are not blister packed. This is ensuring that seniors using this type of packaging are paying three time the amount for a three-month supply.

Ralph Morris added that in small isolated communities, drugs are often dispensed in one-month supplies because of lack of competition. This also forces seniors on fixed incomes to pay three times the dispensing fees.

Anne Marie Cleary informed Ms. Walsh that eye glasses purchased across the island are a lot more expensive than those purchased in St. John's also because of lack of competition.

Jon Soper indicated that access to primary healthcare factors into the overall health of seniors.

Sharron Callahan outlined that Nurse Practitioners are not being used to the full scope of practice. It could be augmented if the rules were amended so that nurse practitioners could be paid under the MCP program.

Ralph Morris indicated that it has been 17 years since the Nursing Home regulations have been reviewed. The legislation says they must be reviewed every 5 years.

Winston Fiander expressed a need for the Auditor General to go inside the health care system and do a complete audit.

Sharron and Ralph agree that labor issues are a major factor in health care right now. There are simply not enough people to do the work.

Susan Walsh expressed a willingness to return for another meeting to hear our input and to give us an update on the consultation process when it is done and recommendations are developed.

Ms. Walsh and Ms. Billiard left the meeting at approximately 11:00

Regular Coalition Agenda:

At this point, by consensus vote we returned to our agenda.

It was motion by Mike Siscoe and seconded by Ralph Morris that the minutes of the May 3, 2022 meeting would be accepted as present. All in favor. Carried.

Sharon informed the group that we had received a reply from Minister Haggie regarding Seniors and their inability to use some of the technology at the blood donor clinic.

We also received a reply from the CEO of Eastern Health addressing the issue. He indicates that there is staff on hand to help anyone who needs assistance. Bob Howard indicated that through experience, it was faster to get in by calling the number versus trying to get an appointment online. Ralph Morris had the same experience. He could get an appointment within minutes as a walk-in client but was quoted four weeks online.

Sharron reviewed the process of getting rapid test kits from the Red Cross. She explained how to apply and how to work through the accounting process afterwards.

On July 25, 2022, Sharron and Anne-Marie met with Darrin Fisher, the Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Seniors. The meeting was a discussion around Service Canada's and Service delivery. There was an information session about grants that are available and the application process. It was noted that in some circumstances the funding of a grant does not coincide with the actual implementation of the grant project timeline. The application can be difficult to complete, cannot be saved and recovered, and many groups applying simply give up out of frustration. Also, the project for which funding is being sought often spans longer than a year, but the funding is annually limited forcing groups to drop the project or find a new way to message the project in the application to seek continued funding.

Sharon also informed the group about the public engagement on the social and economic well-being engagement plan. This was formally known as the poverty reduction plan. It is headed by John Abbot and online engagement sessions are taking place now. We hope to meet with Minister Abbot after the engagement sessions to be informed of the information gathered.

We had a meeting as a Coalition set for September 12 with Minister Haggie. Sharron has been contacting the Minister's Office to see if Minister Osborne will honor the commitment made by his predecessor. Sharron will advise as soon as she is able to confirm. Our next actions will be to engage with government on the closure of emergency services. Increasing the use of nurse practitioners to their full scope of practice.

The F/P/T Ministers have started a public engagement with the provinces on ageism. Engagement is an online consultation. The Coalition members are encouraged to complete the online survey. Should there be public consultations, Sharron will advise

Sharon Callahan, the current, Executive Director of the NLPSPA updated the Coalition that the NLPSPA is in the process of hiring a new Executive Director. When that process is complete and training has taken place Sharron will leave her current executive position. This, in turn will mean a change in chair of the Coalition.

The next meeting is tentatively set for September 12, 2022 or at the call of the chair if it should be deemed necessary to have an earlier meeting.

Sharon Penney