

**Record of Coalition Meeting with MP Clifford Small (PC)**  
**January 14, 2022, 9:30 am**  
**Zoom Format**

In attendance: Sharron Callahan (Chair), Ann Marie Cleary, Patricia Parsons, Mike Siscoe, Jon Soper, Ralph Morris, Helena Bragg, Maurice Brewster, Sharon Penney, PC MP Clifford Small (by invitation).

Sharron opened the meeting by providing Mr. Small with an overview of the Coalition. She reviewed the history, composition and aims of the Coalition.

Mr. Small introduced himself and spoke about the boundaries of his constituency and the population demographics of his area. He stated up front that he would be an advocate for aligning pension increases to the cost of living. He also acknowledged that seniors are the largest voting block and that they do indeed vote and thus have a voice.

Each of the member organization representatives gave a brief introduction about their individual groups.

Sharron informed Mr. Small that we, as a Coalition, have always sought to engage with politicians and the political parties by sending them a list of our priorities when elections are called and by following up with the successful candidates to see how and if they are supporting our concerns. She referenced that we have read the mandate letters for ministers and expect those mandates to be filled. Sharron pointed out that often our concerns overlap across several Ministerial portfolios and listed the following as our key areas of concern:

- National Seniors Strategy
- National Universal Pharmacare
- LTC (Long Term Care)
- Ageing at Home
- Preventive Health Services
- Financial Security, and
- Elder Abuse.

- 1) National Seniors Strategy. We acknowledged that the development of the Minister for Seniors Office was a huge step in the right direction, but now their needs to be a national seniors strategy developed and enacted across our country.
- 2) National Pharmacare Strategy- We expressed concern that there appears to be a weakening in the wording of the Mandate letter around this strategy. It now states that the Federal Government will engage with **willing** provinces and territories. We do not see how it can possibly be a national universal plan unless all provinces and territories are party to it. Mr. Small reiterated, for clarification purposes, that the Coalition wants a national program not one that is administered by the provinces. Ralph Morris added that a National Medicare Plan and a National Pharmacare plan must go hand in hand. He further commented that a National Pharmacare Plan will keep seniors out of LTC beds as it will permit many seniors to be totally compliant with their drug regimens. Mike Siscoe cautioned that if funding is made to the provinces it must come with very stringent rules and regulations, that are identifiable to ensure that the monies go to Pharmacare and not just used to top up the existing Government Drug Plan. Jon Soper expressed concern that the PC Party of Canada has no

voiced policy on working with the provinces or drug companies in developing a National Pharmacare Policy.

- 3) Preventative Health Care Strategies and Ageing at Home - The Health Accord Meetings show that the majority of older people want to age at home or in their home communities for as long as possible. In order for this to happen, services must be provided to enable it. These services must include access to medications, medication supervision to ensure compliance, home care workers, vision care services, and dental care policies to name just a few. The Coalition feels that we, as a province, need to reimagine health care and redirect monies to community care rather than to institutional care settings. The Federal Government in the past has referred to an Ageing at Home Strategy but now refers to an Ageing at Home benefit. The Ageing at Home strategy is best for seniors if the services to support it are available. Ralph indicated that country wide 70+ % of the population want to age at home. He also informed Mr. Small that some small simple changes to the building code as residences are built will go a long way into permitting the next generation to age at home. Doors made 32" wide instead of the current standard of 30" will permit wheelchair accessibility without retrofitting a home. Elevators in congregate settings should be big enough to accommodate a stretcher thus allowing those units to be used by seniors.
- 4) National Standards for Long Term Care- The Coalition's concern here is that Residential Facilities are not always providing adequate care. As this program is developed it is imperative that any consultation include Newfoundland and Labrador. We have been concerned about this issue for some time and have identified a series of practical recommendations that would assist any national policy development.
- 5) Financial Security- Pension plans are under attack across the country. The Coalition is concerned that the erosion of benefits by changing pension plans from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans will negatively affect seniors. Currently we are concerned about the impact that the acceptance of CERB benefits is having on the Guaranteed Income Supplement. We, the Coalition, have already met with Minister John Abbot regarding a Poverty Reduction Strategy. Seniors' poverty is a serious issue and needs a directed response. We have asked to be part of the strategy development phase.
- 6) Elder Abuse- This concept does not have a definition in the Criminal Code of Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador recently passed the Adult Protection Act, Bill 40. Currently we are awaiting regulations to support the Bill. They should be available in February or March.
- 7) Other-
  - A) Mike Siscoe raised the issue of Seniors and Technology. Many seniors do not have access to technology nor the ability to use it. Seniors are finding it increasingly difficult to engage with governmental and financial institutions. A mechanism needs to be put in place whereby services are accessible to all. Mike also included that the increased use of technology in the delivery of governmental services is also having a financial impact on seniors. Seniors now need a cell phone or computer and internet access to avail of services, all of which are expenses to the senior.
  - B) Seniors are finding themselves in positions where they have sold or otherwise disposed of their homes and are now paying rent. The cost of rent is going up significantly, this is resulting in some seniors being forced into substandard housing or homelessness.

Sharron thanked Mr. Small for his interest and attention to our concerns.

Mr. Small expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to meet with the Coalition, he indicated that he would look to us for input and guidance as he carries out his duties. He provided his email for our use [clifford.small@parl.gc.ca](mailto:clifford.small@parl.gc.ca) . He also stated that if an item is being debated and we want our input known, reach out to him. Mr. Small promises to advocate for seniors within his party and admits that he is on a steep learning curve as he learns his new role.

Meeting finished at 10:30

Minutes recorded by Sharon Penney