

**Coalition Meeting / Seniors Poverty Reduction Plan  
Via Zoom  
February 5, 2024**

The meeting commenced at approximately 10am.

Present: Sharron Callahan, Wayne Noseworthy, Albert Legge, Joanne Morrissey, Linda Phillips, Robert Howard, Mike Siscoe, Marilyn Best and Mary Cleary.

Also in attendance were Renee Ryan and Henry Kielley from the GNL, CSSD.

Sharron welcomed everyone and provided an overview of the work of the Coalition thus far with regard to the Poverty Reduction Plan. On November 8, 2023, the GNL released its Poverty Reduction Plan. At that time there was an acknowledgement that there would be further conversation about a Poverty Reduction Plan for Seniors.

Each member of the Coalition was invited to share their information about the issues that the seniors are experiencing from within their association or from personal experience. Each member of the Coalition represents a different group of retirees and is intone with their concerns, worries and fears in today's economy.

There was a common theme shared by the various members:

Seniors on fixed incomes are struggling to survive in today's economy. Food costs are through the roof, seniors are constantly having to decide what they can buy on their income. The cost of heating their homes was also evident to be a hardship for many, and the seniors are not looking forward to the proposed increases in the coming months, as the proposed rate hike for NL Power is messaged to be a benefit for the shareholders.

Many seniors who are retired from the Provincial Government of NL are not seeing any indexing of their pensions and many retirees have been living on the same amount of pension for the same 20 to 30 years. Their dollars are not able to accommodate the current cost of living.

Seniors living in Long Term Care Homes are struggling as well to be able to pay their fees to enable them to continue to live there.

Inequity in the Provincial Health Care Plans was raised as an issue as well. Eligibility for the Provincial Health Care Plan in NL is based on income. In some other provinces in Canada all are eligible for the provincial health care plan regardless of income. So, the question of equality for all seniors in the country arises again.

Concern was also expressed about the Manual Life / Loblaws arrangement for specialty medications. This raises a concern for anyone who does not have access to a Loblaws Pharmacy regarding accessing prescribed medications.

There is an increase in the number of seniors accessing the local food banks. Seniors who once donated to the food banks are now accessing the service.

Although the Coalition is a voice for pensioners, the group is very aware of the stress that other seniors face, especially those who are dependent solely on OAS and/or CPP.

The problem with the shortage of family doctors was raised as well as the lack of transportation to these appointments. As well many clinics have closed or are on reduced schedules. This is impacting the medical care that is available to the population of the province.

Generally, it was agreed that the GNL can make policy changes that will allow the seniors/pensioners to live with dignity and retain their income and increase their buying power.

Many facets of the day-to-day living were highlighted as needing review: Income that keeps pace with the cost of living, cost of food and housing, home heating costs, co-pay for medications, access to medical care and the means to get there, equity among seniors regardless of where they reside.

Renee Ryan and Henry Kelley listened to the concerns and advised that there are various initiatives to be released by the GNL. The concerns raised will be brought back to the GNL for consideration.

The meeting concluded at 12:05pm.

Minutes recorded by:  
Mary Cleary