

## **PRESS CONFERENCE**

### **COALITION OF PESNIOERS, RETIREES, SENIORS ORGANIZATIONS**

**APRIL 19, 2016**

Two positives in the budget:

1. Commitment to the introduction of the Seniors Advocate, long overdue, we will be looking to the details around this implementation. Limited funding mentioned in this budget for this, so it would appear as if the amount of allocated funding would be insufficient for this to be implemented.
2. Low income support for individuals and families. This is available to the vulnerable sector of low income families, seniors, and families with children with special needs. While there is a small increase, it still remains insufficient to look after the needs of these persons and families. Benefit amount is a positive, but the amount will be negative when you factor in the cancellation.

#### **Negatives in Budget**

1. Heating rebate and hst rebate cancelled.
2. Took two of these rebate programs and added them together and added an additional \$250 bringing the total from \$1063 to \$1313, for an increase of \$250.(applies to seniors singles and seniors couples, who would be on OAS and GIS) Net for single: \$16,000 or less; couple \$26,000.
3. Any other tax eligibility benefits that anyone else would have gotten will be reduced accordingly. For example a single parent with one child on a \$16,000 net income will receive \$116.50 quarterly, whereas they normally would have gotten the hst and home heating rebate.
4. Implement limits on access to non-life sustaining medical transportation benefits, i.e. reduce the availability of medical transportation benefits to clients living in an area services by a public bus system; encourage private vehicle use. Limited benefit of \$3,000 with some exceptions.
5. Eliminated the transportation benefit under the child care services subsidy (child undergoing treatment).
6. Remove the NL Provincial Drug Program coverage for over the counter drugs/services and introduce diabetic test strip limits. Some serious questions about what is involved. Answer to this is education.

7. Introduce a two hour cap on homemaking hours subsidized under the Home Support Program. This program supports individuals, mostly seniors and disable person, continue to live in their own homes and not be institutionalized. PROJECTED SAVINGS OF \$3.9 MILLION for 2016. Provides homemaking services for folks needing help around the home, non-medical. This will result in more hospitalizations for folks who could be cared for at home.
8. Increase in rate for long term care for private paying clients, increased by \$190 per month, with additional increases based on CPI. Increases yearly based on CPI. Once personal funds depleted, person often stays in private accommodations, at public cost.
9. Eliminate Adult Dental Program coverage for clients of NL Provincial Drug Program under the Access and 65+. In some cases, people will no longer be able to chew food properly (gum an apple to death). Implications for overall health.
- 10.Reduction of nursing and physician bursaries will impact rural NL the most, making it more difficult to access health services locally. Significant impact for older persons.
- 11.Reduction of operational grants to Regional Health authorities.
- 12.Discontinue 24 hour snow clearing. What contingency plans are in place for those who have to travel our highways during time when the “the roads are closed”. Are we going to return the snow plows from the old “Newfie Bullet” onto ambulances and busses?
- 13.Changes to ferry schedules. What will they be? Not a bad thing, but need assurance of the times when folks are travelling for medical needs or attending to personal needs (grocery shopping). Need a good communication and booking system.

## Taxes:

1. Tax increase below \$35,000 = .5%.
2. Someone at over \$175,000 only pays an increase of 1.5%, grossly disproportionate;
3. Gas gone up 16.5cents a litre, plus add hst = 18.5 cents per litre. When compounded, will be higher as gas will be over \$1.00.
4. Vehicle insurance gone up by 15%
5. Retail sales tax gone from 14% to 15%, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>
6. TEMPORARY DEDUCTION LEVY. Tax to live in NL. Paid by every person who have a taxable income of \$20,000 plus 1 cent. Some of those in receipt of seniors benefit supplement are going to be worse off as they will be paying a proportional amount of this levy, taking more out of their pockets than they are actually taking in. Folks will hurt on this and impact the quality of life.
7. Levy will result in a reduction of goods and services folks will obtain from businesses, business will be impacted, layoffs will occur.
8. Fee increases, 13 pages, affecting just about everyone in the province, including vehicle licenses, death certificates, etc.