

August 19th, 2023

Attn: The Honourable Robert Fowler

RE: Review of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate

Sir,

Please accept this submission in your consideration and evaluation of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate in Newfoundland and Labrador. I do realise that the submission is several weeks past your submission date. This delay was unavoidable for several reasons, and I hope that it can still form part of this discussion on such an important topic.

I am a retired, full-time resident living on Fogo Island, NL. I retired after almost 27 years serving with the RCMP across eastern Canada. Since my retirement, I have kept busy, as do most Canadian retirees, by volunteering both within my local community and beyond. In this vein, I was elected in 2022 as a national director for the board of the National Association of Federal Retirees. Our association currently has almost 170,000 members consisting of serving and retired Public Servants, CAF members, RCMP members, federally appointed judges, and the spouses of these members. We have four (4) main priorities which include (1) Retirement Income Security for all Seniors, (2) a National Seniors Strategy, (3) Veteran Well-being and (4) a National Pharmacare program.

We are a vibrant association which advocates for the rights and wellness of all older Canadians. Canada is a vast and wealthy country as you are aware, but this most recent pandemic clearly showed how fragile and ill equipped our country was to look after it's most vulnerable.

Canada has a fast-growing senior population and, while positive steps have been taken, much more needs to be done. Seniors need to be supported and empowered to age safely in their homes. If long-term care is required, it should be structured around enforceable standards that ensure protection and a vibrant life experience. Pharmaceuticals need to be affordable to all and not a choice that one makes against other costs of life. First and foremost, Canada needs a national senior strategy to coordinate and balance these essentials and how they are implemented.

While everyone agrees that these issues are necessary, there is some discord as to how to get there and who should coordinate and evaluate the progress at the provincial level. To this end, Newfoundland and Labrador is in the enviable position of being one of only three (3) provinces with a dedicated Seniors' Advocate. We are also a province that outpaces the others demographically when it comes to seniors. This office is essential. It's work will continue to grow as does the population it serves and to consider combining it with another office or, eliminating it all together would be a resounding announcement that Newfoundland and Labrador does not understand it's obligations to this important sector of the population and/or it does not wish to open itself up to any form of constructive criticism.

Evaluation, discussion, learning, changing, and adapting are how we improve systems. The Office of the Seniors' Advocate serves as one of the most important roles in this process and we implore you to realize it's worth and fully support that work that has only just begun. The National Association of Federal Retirees works with this office, and we hope that this will continue in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please know that I am always available and would welcome further involvement in this process.



Roland Wells



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