

Meeting of the Seniors' Advisory Council of Nova Scotia
Wednesday June 3, 2020 / 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Teleconference

1. Attendance

Present: Bill Berryman, *Retired Teachers Organization*
Alyson Hillier, *Retired Teachers Organization*
Bernard Conrad, *Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees Association*
Ernestine Gouthro, *Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees Association*
Bill VanGorder, *CARP Nova Scotia Chapter*
Claude Renaud, *Regroupement des aines de la Nouvelle Ecosse*
Veronique Legault, *Regroupement des aines de la Nouvelle Ecosse*
Helen MacDonnell, *Community Links*
Carol Rogers, *Community Links*
Peter Kerr, *National Association of Federal Retirees*
Michelle Langille, *National Association of Federal Retirees*
Ron Swan, *CARP Nova Scotia Chapter*
Simon d'Entremont, *Department of Seniors*
Faizal Nanji, *Department of Seniors*
Lyndsay Aird, *Department of Seniors*
Alma Johnston-Tynes, *Federation of Senior Citizens*
Margaret Casey, *Senior and Retired Doctors Section of Doctors Nova Scotia*
Phil Bagnell, *Senior and Retired Doctors Section of Doctors Nova Scotia*
Terry Donovan, *Federation of Senior Citizens*

Regrets: Richard Malin, *Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command*

2. Call to Order

Bill welcomed Council members and called the meeting to order. Council observed a moment of silence for George Cottreau and the seniors that have passed away from COVID-19 in Nova Scotia.

3. Additions/Adoption of Agenda

MOTION: That the agenda be approve with "High Dose Flu Vaccine" and "Communications for Seniors" added under New Business
Michelle Langille/Margaret Casey CARRIED

4. Approval of April 23, 2020 Minutes

MOTION: That the minutes of April 23, 2020 be approved as amended
Michelle Langille/Margaret Casey CARRIED

5. Action Items – April 23, 2020

Bill indicated all items would be discussed at the meeting

6. Nova Scotia Capped Assessment Program (CAP)

A sub-committee of Ron Swan, Helen MacDonnell, Terry Donovan, Peter Kerr and Bill Berryman was approved to work on a Seniors Advisory Council response. The committee will be developing a “Seniors Friendly Alternative Proposal” to the CAP. The committee will seek the findings of the All Party Committee, assess the findings as well as other alternatives. The committee will complete its task over the summer and present its recommendations to the September 24, 2020 Council meeting.

7. Treasurer’s Report

There was a question raised about the need for two signatures on cheques (as stated in the Structure and Operating Procedures) and only one-signature for on-line banking. Council members approve all expenditures by motion and therefore on-line banking is acceptable as it is similar to double signatures on cheques.

MOTION: That the Seniors Advisory Council receive the Treasurer’s Report
Michelle Langille/Margaret Casey CARRIED

8. Update from Department of Seniors

a) Renewal costs of drugs 90 days vs. 30 days

Simon contacted Kathleen Coleman, Acting Executive Director, Pharmaceutical Services and Extended Health Benefits, about the discrepancy in costs by different pharmacies. He also checked with his pharmacist and was told this was acceptable practices.

b) Home Warming Program monies diversion

Simon indicated that it was too early to find out how the \$3 million was spent by Meals on Wheels (\$1.6 million), United Way (\$1 million) and shelters (\$400,000).

c) Senior Safety Coordinators Emergency Funding

Simon indicated Jacqueline Campbell is working with the 18 coordinators in trying to get the messages out to seniors needing help. It was hoped that all coordinators could provide a card with phone numbers similar to the one used in West/East Hants. The monies are being spent by the coordinators according to the needs of their area.

d) Dr. Strang and Premier meeting with businesses

Questions were raised why these types of meetings did not take place with the Seniors Advisory Council. Simon indicated that a meeting will be arranged with Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister of Business and Deputy Minister of the Office of Strategy Management and Dr. Strang to seek our perspective on re-opening the province.

e) SHIFT 2.0

Simon indicated that he will be calling a meeting with the Advisory Committee and have a discussion on the need to keep seniors in their own homes vs. long-term care facilities, greater access to the internet, how technology can help seniors, food security and ageism. He would then seek feedback from the Council after this meeting.

9. New Business

a. Community Links Emergency Funding

Helen provided an update on the \$110,000 Community Links received from the Department of Seniors of which \$75,000 has been dispersed. Seniors were very happy with free transportation/deliveries to access pharmacies, groceries and other basic necessities, meals on wheels, masks, recreation packages for home exercise, ZOOM meetings, transportation to medical appointments, etc.

b. Federal government support for seniors

Council members acknowledged the government's financial help for seniors with a \$300 tax free payment for seniors eligible for Old Age Security and a further \$200 for seniors eligible for Guaranteed Income Supplement. The government has also added \$20 million to the New Horizons for Seniors Program.

c. Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support Portal

Council members were pleased to receive information on this and passed it on to their members as many seniors are having difficulties due to social isolation under COVID-19.

d. Emergency Community Support Fund

The Federal government has provided \$350 million to support community organizations in Canada helping vulnerable people during the COVID-19 crisis. In Nova Scotia the United Way will receive \$2.28 million and the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia will receive \$1.12 million. Another group receiving funds will be the Canadian Red Cross in the province.

e. Develop Nova Scotia – Accelerated Internet Project

There was a short discussion on the additional \$15 million provided by the province to speed up delivery of high-speed internet to Cumberland, Colchester, Queens and Shelburne counties.

10. Glen Freil – Communications Nova Scotia

On June 15, 2020 the Department of Seniors will be celebrating Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Glen is working with Jacqueline and Elizabeth producing resources on the issue. There will be written materials, an active Facebook site, 211 updates and news releases. Materials will be available to the MLA's office, Senior Safety Coordinators and groups working with seniors under COVID-19. Glen acknowledged that our members don't rely on Facebook and there is a need for written materials in plain language.

11. Dr. Robert Strang – Chief Medical Officer Nova Scotia

Dr. Strang spoke on the re-opening of the economy on June 5, 2020 and the need to closely monitor the reaction for the next two weeks. He indicated if things went well there was the possibility of having groups of up to 25 individuals on July 1 and up to 50 on August 1. He also spoke on the possibility of visitors being allowed in long-term care facilities if wearing a mask and keeping social distancing. He also hoped that the border restrictions between New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia would be lifted in late June.

A questions was raised about providing High Dose Flu Vaccine for "at risk" seniors in the fall. Dr. Strang indicated Chief Medical Officers across Canada have requested the Federal government pay for this vaccine as they do not anticipate a COVID-19 vaccine this year. He suggested I re-send my letter to the Minister of Health and Wellness requesting High Dose Flu Vaccine for "at risk" seniors.

12. Round Table

Due to time restrictions it was not possible to have updates from the nine organizations.

- 13. Next Meeting:** September 24, 2020 although there is a possibility to have a meeting with Bernie Miller and Dr. Strang beforehand.

14. Adjournment

MOTION: That the meeting adjourn

Michelle Langille/Margaret Casey

CARRIED