

Health Services Committee Minutes February 26, 2024

Since our last meeting, our president Bill Berryman has reached out to the National Pensioners' Federation in response to their request that we work collaboratively with them. We shared our New Mode campaign and other information with them. He has connected with the Canadian Health Coalition and offered our support for their ongoing initiatives. These two organizations are closely aligned with our efforts. Our plan is to continue to keep in contact with them and work to our mutual advantage.

The Hon. Seamus O'Regan has indicated that he will be bringing greetings from the government at our AGM Banquet on June 7, 2024.

The New Mode letter writing campaign is now live. A series of reminders and a follow-up letter from ACER/CART President Bill Berryman will be issued next week. Please take a few minutes to sign this online petition and share it with your contact lists.

The Communications Committee has developed a banner for individual organizations to use when promoting ACER-CART initiatives.

Ageing in Place was discussed. The following were identified as impacting this initiative:

- a) Difficulties in obtaining and retaining personnel for Home Care positions.
- b) Cost of Home Care Workers. One person was quoted in excess of \$11 per minute for a Home Care Worker.
- c) Transportation was identified as a limiting factor in Ageing in Place. This was evident in all rural areas.
- d) Some provinces are making positive inroads by developing websites that promote services for seniors.
- e) One province provides transportation to appointments by utilizing a series of transportation options across a variety of programming areas.
- f) Some provinces provided a service care team that visits seniors in their place of residence and makes overall recommendations as to the lifestyle and physical changes to the home that makes ageing at home more conducive. This team is multidisciplinary and includes a nurse, an occupational therapist and a general handyman.

The committee reviewed a document that outlines the components for a senior's strategy they are A) publicly funded home care B) community infrastructure to support ageing in place C) economic security. The committee will continue to use this document as a basis for discussion at future meetings.

An announcement has been made that a Universal Pharmacare Plan that has coverage for contraception and diabetes drugs and related equipment will be officially launched by the March 1, 2024, deadline imposed by the NDP. While this is a very limited formulary, it is important to note that the plan is being promoted as a "single-payer system" "this provides a pathway for expansion under the auspices of a Universal Pharmacare Plan. We now need to work on an expansion of the program.

There was a discussion as to if there were limitations to enrolment. It is vital that this be a national policy and that individual provinces not opt out.

ACER/CART President attended a seminar with the Canadian Medical Association (CMA). It seems that the CMA is promoting a public/private system rather than a fully public plan. Of the 10 items presented 7 referenced a combination of private and public health involvement. Private clinics for profit are a contravention of the Canada Health Act, but the CMA is not putting policies in place that prohibit such clinics. The focus group for this seminar is medical practitioners rather than the patients. There will be a report issued in the spring, after consultations have concluded. This has a direct effect on our Ageing in Place initiative because access to doctors and medical facilities is paramount to assisting a senior to Age in Place.

There has not been a response from the Canadian Medical Association to the letter that Past President Martin Higgs wrote expressing our concerns about the encroachment of private health care into the public health system.

The Dental Plan was discussed. There are limitations around the eligibility for the program. There is an income test and an existing coverage test. You are considered to have access to dental insurance even if you chose to opt out of your plan and are therefore not eligible to join the Canadian Dental Care Plan. There is a concern that not all dentists are opting into the plan. This new government plan in some cases provides less coverage than some private dental plans.

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