



Your Voice

MUN Pensioners Association (MUNPA) Newsletter

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Guest Editorial: TOWARDS A UNITED VOICE

There are more than half a dozen pensioners' associations in Newfoundland representing more than 22,000 retirees from public-sector agencies. The groups and their individual members alike have often found their voices too faint to get the government's serious attention.

One example is the issue of benefits for Memorial's pre-1997 survivors. In May acting Memorial president Eddy Campbell advised that the Board of Regents had voted not to raise their pensions from 55% to 60%. The basic reason appears to have been concern that what was done by Memorial would place pressure upon the government to do the same for others.

Memorial has its own pension act and MUNPA is not strictly a public sector pensioners association, but we clearly share many concerns with these other groups. We have therefore affiliated with a Coalition led by the Newfoundland & Labrador Public Service Pensioners' Association. Together we may yet be able to convince the government to do the right thing for pre-'97 survivors but also to do more to increase the consumable income of senior citizens, improve health benefits and take part in an effective forum on retirees' issues.

An extensive report on the coalition was published in the May 16 edition of *The Telegram*, page A4: "Public-service pensioners unite to call for increased payments."

The importance of working together is clear against a broader spectrum of groups. MUNPA interacts with the local Senior Resources Centre, the Canadian Association for the 50Plus (CARP), a provincial Seniors' Organizations Networking Forum and other bodies. At the same time we worry about a splintering of effort and fragmentation of 70,000 Newfoundland pensioners' voices. Information sharing and meaningful cooperation is a priority.

In this spirit I recently attended meetings of CURAC, the *College and University Retiree Associations of Canada*. It is fascinating to observe the many different pension and benefits regimes across the country. By learning more about the best national practices we hope to create the rising tide that lifts all our boats.

Evan Simpson, President, MUNPA

Public pensioners associations form a single coalition

Several public sector pensioners associations in Newfoundland and Labrador have united to form the *Pensioners' Coalition 2008*.

Coalition spokesperson, Robert Langdon, is quoted in a recent press release: "This coalition recognizes that public sector pensioners in Newfoundland and Labrador need a col-

lective voice, to address their issues with management of public sector pension funds in the province."

The associations/groups included in the coalition are:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Public Sector Pensioners Association
- Retired Teachers' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Memorial University of Newfoundland Pensioners Association

- Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Veterans' Association
- St. John's Fire Fighters' Retirees Association
- NAPE Local 7002
- Retired Penitentiary Warders
- (It is expected that the Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses Union will join the Coalition in the near future)

The Coalition held a founding meeting on March 27. Since then, two additional meetings have been held and priorities for the groups have been identified. The press release states, "First and foremost, the Coalition is committed to Increasing the consumable Income for Pensioners; and secondly, addressing matters relating to health benefits."

A letter has been sent to Premier Williams requesting a meeting to discuss a number of pension and health benefit related issues.



Robert Langdon addresses the press conference on May 15. MUNPA President, Evan Simpson, is to Langdon's right

April 30 MUNPA Information Sessions

On April 30 MUNPA held a day long series of information sessions for members at Bally Haly Golf and Curling Club. In the morning presentations on seniors housing issues were provided by Robert Lewis, Sharon Buehler, Jackie McDonald, and Geoff Penney. In the afternoon Don Cuff provided a presentation on financial matters for seniors. Also, a number of groups

including the *Seniors Resource Centre, The Works, the Independent Living Centre, and MUN Lifelong Learning* set up information tables. The sessions were attended by 43 members of MUNPA.

Evaluations of the sessions were very positive. Almost all attendees thought that the sessions were useful, that Bally Haly was a good location for such events, and that MUNPA should organize similar events in the future. Members had numerous suggestions as to the nature of future events. Of the alternatives offered, members were most interested in information events on serious topics. There was also considerable interest in excursions and tours, and instructional sessions.



Members at Bally Haly information sessions

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