**Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents’ Rights**

 **“Standing up for you”**

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**Cecile Cassista**

**Executive Director**

**Annual Meeting - Riverview Lions Club**

**October 14, 2022**

Good morning, Welcome

It’s hard to believe we are still advocating for change. Eighteen years ago, a group of volunteers came together known as the Coalition for Nursing Home Rights, to advocate for change of the calculation of nursing home fees. **Today we are known as the NB Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents’ Rights.**

At that time, the cost of being in a nursing home for care and accommodation varied from home to home. The rates were based on the value of your assets including cottages, investment, bank accounts and woodlot to cover the cost of nursing home services.

In addition, if you transferred your asset value to a family member, it would be considered, going back five years prior to asking for financial help. All liquid assets both spouses were used to cover the cost of nursing home fees.

In 2006 substantial changes happened daily fees were changed to income only.

The Coalition focused on one item to achieve the removal of assets from the calculation of nursing home fees. We soon learned that we needed to be a voice for the most vulnerable people of New Brunswick.

The work of the Coalition has not diminished, we continue to be in the forefront to deliver our message for improved senior care. The senior’s file has been a busy file particularly during the pandemic. Covid has exposed some uncomfortable truths about our society, how seniors/older adults are cared for in care facilities.

Not only in New Brunswick but right across the country long-term care and special care homes have been the hardest hit by the pandemic, exposing the failures of a system that must be strengthened.

Senior’s care needs to be enhanced on several fronts so that seniors may live with respect and dignity in an environment and community of choice. Seniors have built this beautiful province.

It is not acceptable for seniors to spend the rest of their lives, waiting lengthy periods to be fed, bathed, and remain in their bed clothes during the day with no daily stimulation. This is not a healthy way for seniors to conclude their end of life. It is heartbreaking and unacceptable.

New Brunswick is unique, the Extra Mural program enhances opportunities for people to stay in their homes and avoid nursing home placement and long hospital stays. This program is New Brunswick gem and should receive added resources to continue innovative ways to support comprehensive health care needs.

In all other provinces, continuum of care (home care and long-term care) is the responsibility of health care. The Regional Health Authorities should manage all senior care programs unlike the current system that is under the auspices of Social Development.

We continue to advocate for Seniors rights. We have made improvements along the way, more needs to happen. The home care system needs to be strengthened; nursing home fees needs to reflect affordable income. The assessment process needs to be streamlined so that seniors are not languishing in acute hospital beds for months.

We have made a submission to the government on Bill 80 - Discharge of residents from Nursing Homes and Special Care Homes. We have made several recommendations to the Seniors Advocate of the province, to “Protect Seniors Rights.” We continue to communicate with the Department of Social Development, on several topics, as it relates to policies affecting the elderly.

Special Care home rates should be legislated to affordable rates. The inspection of homes is closely watched with frequent inspections to ensure the safety of the seniors, the list is on going.

In the last year we have registered as non-for-profit status, redeveloped the Coalition policies that guides the work of the Coalition. Renewed the website.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our member groups. The Coalition is still arms length from any level of government funding.

We continue to explore other ways to increase our funding ability through other means, in addition to member groups support, such as making presentation and more recently as you will hear from Diane Mollins a new initiative of donation cards for funeral homes.

The Coalition is willing to work alongside anyone who is committed to the welfare of our seniors and who wants to be part of the system that cares for them. We invite you to join us in that effort.

In closing, I want to express special recognition and thanks to the Board of Directors for their ongoing commitment to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people of society, our SENIORS.

Respectfully Submitted

Cecile Cassista,