

SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW
OF THE
LONG TERM CARE PROGRAM FOR SENIORS

FOR THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR SENIORS AND HOUSING
HON. MARY SCHRYER

PREPARED BY THE:

PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF DISABLED PERSONS
440 KING STREET, SUITE 648
FREDERICTON, N.B. E3B 5H8
TEL: (506) 444-3000
TOLL FREE IN N.B.: 1-800-442-4412
FAX: (506) 444-3001
EMAIL: PCSDP@GNB.CA
WEBSITE: WWW.GNB.CA/0048

JUNE 2007

PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF DISABLED PERSONS

WHO ARE WE?

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons is a body for consultation and study which was created to advise the provincial government on matters relating to the status of persons with disabilities. The Council reports directly to the Premier of the Province.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Act governing the Premier's Council states that the Council shall advise the Minister on matters relating to the status of persons with disabilities; shall bring before the government and the public matters of interest and concern to persons with disabilities; shall promote prevention of disabling conditions; shall promote employment opportunities of persons with disabilities; and shall promote access by persons with disabilities to all services offered to the citizens of New Brunswick.

STRUCTURE

The Council consists of a Chairperson and twelve other members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. Provisions in the Act guarantee representation by regions, agencies working on behalf of persons with disabilities and the public at large.

ACTIVITIES

To carry out its functions, the Council will receive briefs and suggestions from individuals and groups concerning the status of persons of any age with disabilities of any type; undertake research on matters relating to persons with disabilities; recommend programs concerning the status of persons with disabilities; make referrals to and consult and collaborate with universities and individuals on matters which affect persons with disabilities; propose legislation, studies and recommendations as the Council considers necessary; appoint special committees when needed; maintain an information library on subjects related to persons with disabilities and on any services/programs likely to be of interest to persons with disabilities; and offer advice and/or intervention in cases where persons with disabilities are having difficulties in gaining access to needed services.

COMMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION WITH THE REVIEW OF THE LONG TERM CARE PROGRAM FOR SENIORS

- New Brunswick has a growing number of senior citizens who also have a chronic health condition or disability that may require some kind of supports in order for them to function successfully in the community.
- New Brunswick should look at the Nova Scotia model for home support workers that has been redesigned under the Continuing Care Assistants program to set training standards and adequate compensation packages for home care support workers for seniors and others requiring such services. We have an existing and growing problem in the recruitment and retention of trained quality home care support workers in New Brunswick. Inadequate compensation and inconsistent training are huge barriers to attracting good workers into this type of employment.
- Access to affordable and accessible transportation in the rural areas of New Brunswick as well as the urban centers is a huge challenge for seniors who are unable to safely drive or cannot afford to own and operate a vehicle of their own.
- The province of New Brunswick should respond to a proposal from the community stakeholder groups to provide an independent Residential Quality Assurance Program for any residential facility funded in whole or in part with government money to ensure that residents are receiving appropriate care. This would include community residences and special care homes. We understand that another more detailed joint submission on this topic will be forthcoming under the leadership of the Canadian Mental Health Association with other groups involved.
- We would like to see a review of the cases of younger adults with disabilities being mixed in and housed with frail seniors at nursing homes. The interests and needs of these two groups of clients may not be well addressed in such shared facilities with programs and support services designed for frail seniors.

- The province needs to continue to increase the number of available accessible and affordable housing options for seniors with disabilities as well as connecting them to appropriate disability supports if required to enable the senior to live in their own homes as long as possible.
- Seniors with a disability living in nursing homes should have timely access to assessments for rehabilitation equipment required to enable them to maintain their independence and mobility. Such rehabilitation equipment needs to be approved and delivered in a timely fashion while it is still useful for the person in question and before their condition deteriorates unnecessarily.
- Public education campaigns should be conducted to inform the public at large about “Power of Attorney” and “Advance Medical Directives”. This would help prepare seniors and their families as to how to deal with making decisions around managing financial and medical issues should the senior in question no longer be able to do so on their own.
- The new Office of the Public Trustee should inform the general public as to their respective roles and responsibilities in the area of declaring a person incompetent before taking over the management of a senior’s financial or medical affairs without having other legal authorization in place as set up by the senior involved.
- The government should explore options to encourage families to take on the care and support of seniors so they will not be penalized for being willing to provide a home for that senior. For example, they should be able to do so without using their family income in calculating support available for that person from public programs.
- New Brunswick should consider passing legislation similar to Nova Scotia to provide volunteer liability protection to encourage more citizens in the community to offer support to seniors in such ways as providing a ride or delivering other community programming without fear that they will be sued if that senior is accidentally injured while participating.

- The provincial government should work with municipal authorities to encourage flexibility in residential zoning regulations to allow the use of “Granny Suites” and other housing options that would enable more seniors to stay in their community closer to families and friends.
- We should look at ways to help cover out-of-pocket expenses for volunteers and/or offer income tax incentives to encourage more persons to support community programs that benefit seniors like Meals on Wheels and volunteer drivers.
- We should consult with community stakeholders to see if there is a way to set up an affordable “Handy Person” service for seniors. This program could employ persons on social assistance who have been screened and have general skills for home maintenance, lawn work, snow shoveling etc. for seniors on low incomes trying to stay in their own homes. Some community volunteers may also be interested in getting matched up with needy seniors to do such tasks.
- Perhaps the Department of Education could consider setting up a school-based program to “adopt” various seniors in the community who do not have family or relatives living close by to offer emotional support and a community lifeline. Perhaps some students would even be willing to do volunteer odd jobs for these “adopted” seniors and could benefit through the contact with an individual from another generation. Such a program could be mutually beneficial to all parties involved. The federal New Horizons for Seniors Program could be a potential source of funding to establish such a service.
- We are particularly concerned with the situation faced by many elderly parents of adult children with disabilities who are still living in the family home with their adult children with disabilities. These senior parents may be in declining health of their own and are often surviving on limited household incomes as they struggle to look after themselves as well as their adult family members with disabilities. Such situations should be offered more supports and planning advice to address the needs of the seniors and to plan for the future needs of the adults with disabilities when their parents and primary caregivers are no longer alive or able to safely look after their adult children.

- This list of issues should not be considered final or in a specific order of priority for action. The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons would be happy to provide additional input to the Minister and officials from her Department. Thank you for consulting with New Brunswickers on this very important topic.