

RELIGIOUS SOCIAL ACTION COALITION OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others committed to ending the injustice of poverty
www.rsacnl.com

February 2022

To: Newfoundland and Labrador Senators of Canada

The Honourable Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator

Dear Senator Ravalia:

Greetings to you. Aware that Parliament is back in session, you, as Senators, will also be involved in much work covering many matters of concern. We, the Directors of the Religious Social Action Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador (RSACNL), look forward to working with our Members of Parliament and with you, our Senators, as together we seek policies and procedures to serve the well-being of ALL who live in our province and country. In that regard, we raise with you one serious matter, of which you are aware - poverty in our province and country and the urgent need for a guaranteed livable basic income.

For example,

- 67,000 people were categorized as living below the poverty line in NL (2016 census).
- Food insecurity, which reached 14.7% of all households in 2017-18 has risen in the midst of the Pandemic. (Source: Basic Income NL Report)

I am sure you would agree that poverty of this nature is totally unacceptable and is related to income shortage and insecurity.

We were heartened to see your name attached to the Senators' letter of January 17, 2022 (43 Senators from all ten provinces, Yukon and Northwest Territories) to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and other Ministers encouraging them to work with PEI to launch a "demonstration project" that would allow an assessment of investing in a Guaranteed Livable Income for all below the poverty line. We are writing to our additional NL Senators requesting them to add their support to the letter, also, to ensure that the 2022 Budget includes financial support for PEI's request.

In the same letter, you, with the other Senators also applauded the proposed Canada Disability Benefit legislation, providing a basic income for those with disabilities. RSACNL adds its voice of commendation for this proposed legislation.

Measures that provide a guaranteed basic income for seniors (OAS) have had a substantial impact in reducing poverty among seniors. Once the proposed disability benefit is in place, the next logical step is a guaranteed livable basic income for ALL, so that, as Prime Minister Trudeau repeatedly has stated, we will have a Canada "where no one is left behind."

In his book, “Bootstraps Need Boots...”, former Senator Hugh Segal indicates that the impetus for a just solution to poverty will more than likely come from the provinces: “From there, it could spread across the country, as had been the case with universal health insurance in Saskatchewan during the 1960s and Ontario’s guaranteed annual income supplement for seniors in the mid-1970s.”

There is no need to wait for the provinces. We can act now. No doubt, you have added your support to Bill S-233, from Senator Kim Pate, for an “Act to develop a National Framework for a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income”, endorsing Bill 223 of MP Leah Gazan. In addition, the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called for a national action plan to be developed, which includes the implementation of a basic income guarantee as a priority.

We would welcome an opportunity to speak with you collectively and/or individually, via Zoom. You might advise us concerning further steps we can undertake with regard to establishing a guaranteed livable basic income for all. Please reply to: m-pardy@nf.sympatico.ca.

We offer our prayerful support for your justice leadership among us.

Marion Pardy (Very Rev. Dr.), Coordinator
Religious Social Action Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador

*(If you have not read it to date, I highly recommend to you: Segal, Hugh. **Bootstraps Need Boots; One Tory’s Lonely Fight To End Poverty In Canada**. UBC Press, 2019)*

Directors: Dr. Mohammed Nazir – Muslim Association of NL; Dr. Steven Wolinetz – President, Jewish Community Havura; Dr. Veeresh Gadag – Hindu Temple of NL; George H Powell – Baptist; Rami Wadhwa – NL Sikh Society; The Rev. Father Paul Lundrigan – Roman Catholic Church; Haseen Khan – Muslim Association of NL; Captain Steven Barrett – Salvation Army; The Rev. Dale Careen – Anglican Diocese of Eastern NL