

# NDP Caucus News

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## **Affordability Crisis Puts Seniors' Dignity at Risk, Town Hall Reveals**

*"This is about dignity for seniors. There is nothing dignified about having to stay cold in your home, ashamed to ask for help."*

Last night, NL NDP Leader Jim Dinn (St. John's Centre) and MHA Sheilagh O'Leary (St. John's East-Quidi Vidi) held a town hall on the skyrocketing costs of home heating. It was attended by constituents of both districts, along with guest speaker Mohamed Abdallah from Connections for Seniors. Feedback from residents in attendance, the majority being seniors, is that they feel disrespected that affordability issues are not being taken seriously by the former and current governments.

"We know that seniors on fixed incomes are feeling left out in the cold, both figuratively and literally, when it comes to addressing the affordability crisis," Dinn said. "In a province where 25% of our population are seniors, quick-fix solutions – such as a one-time payment of \$400 – are not going to solve systemic issues that continue to make life harder for seniors."

"It was extremely clear that access to medications comes with red tape and bureaucracy, with seniors being told they can only get half of their yearly prescriptions covered, forcing them for half of the year to pay thousands out of pocket," Dinn continued. "We also know that eating nutritious foods to stay healthy is imperative, but right now people are looking at their wallets and questioning what decisions they can make, often resulting in skipped meals or skipped pills. This isn't rhetoric: this is a crisis for seniors."

A speaker at the town hall touched on dignity, calling on government to realize that consistent inaction is forcing seniors to stay in the dark and not reach out to their families for help because they should be settled in life and independent. O'Leary says that this directly impacts the health and well-being of seniors in our province.

"To hear that seniors are spending the winter confined to a single room in their homes, avoiding visits from friends or family because they cannot afford to heat their houses, is deeply upsetting," said O'Leary. "Our seniors have given so much to this province, and it's time we care for them the way they deserve – by ensuring they have nutritious food, warm homes, and the medications they need to thrive."

The NL NDP is calling on the Conservative government to commit to their promise of raising the seniors' benefit and indexing it to inflation, and bringing forward other affordability measures, such as the NDP policy of removing the HST from all forms of home heating.

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