



SENIOR LIBERALS' COMMISSION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Discussion Meeting on the formation of a Kelowna-Lake Country (K-LC) Regional Seniors Club July 25, 2016

Location: home of K-LC Senior Rep Judy Berg

Regrets: Heather Raitt, Chris Fibiger, Margaret Wells, Leonne Wilson, Nancy Coquard

Attendees: Judy Berg, Jim Berg, Doug McDonald, Laurette Barnet, Jim Barnet, Alice Mah Wren
1:00 – 4:00pm

Purpose of Discussion: A small group who expressed interest in exploring the purpose and activities of a Seniors Liberal Club were invited to this inaugural discussion. The low turnout did not, however, impede a wide-reaching discussion.

Summary of Discussion:

Following personal introductions, there was recognition that within this group is a wealth of educational and experiential backgrounds. The following questions were provided prior to meeting. The discussion was free-flowing, but ultimately, most questions were addressed. I have attempted to reflect our thoughts under these headings.

1. What is a Seniors Club?
2. Personal Experience in setting up a Club in Alberta – Doug MacDonald
3. Why is it important?
4. What can I contribute?
5. What will we achieve?
6. Who would participate?
7. Next steps?

What is a Seniors Club?

The Liberal Party of Canada is committed to framing policy from the grassroots. A Seniors Club plays an integral part in keeping “an ear to the ground” to identify not only needs of Seniors but also the interests of Seniors. Issues and recommendations can be funneled into the policy framework for resolutions, into the development of policy and party platforms, or to appropriate ministries. Some issues may be addressed locally, with or without political engagement. Reference was made to the current Working Group on the Live-In Caregiver Program, chaired BC Provincial and National Policy Chair, Doug MacDonald, which could serve as a model for research and education, or referral for political intervention.

The local Electoral District Association (EDA) exists for the purpose of fund raising, identifying candidates, and electing the candidate. The Seniors Commission Rep is a member of the EDA (*in Kelowna-Lake Country this has been identified as a Guest member to the EDA*). The role of the Seniors

Rep, the local Seniors Club, and the provincial and national Seniors Commission, are unique from the EDA in that they serve to dialogue with Seniors in the riding (s) focusing on issues, policies and solutions. It was noted that the Seniors Club could be more integrated into the local EDA goals.

Conclusion: Judy to provide excerpts from the new constitution on the structure and purpose of the Seniors Commission at the provincial and national levels, and information on the formation of Seniors Clubs. Information on the role of the EDA is also attached to distinguish the uniqueness of each body.

<http://slc-cal.liberal.ca/>
<https://www.liberal.ca/files/2016/07/constitution-en.pdf>

Personal Experience with Seniors Clubs:

Doug was instrumental in establishing the first Seniors Club for the Edmonton Region when the concept was first introduced in about 2003. A community-wide luncheon, with speakers on a variety of topics and attended by over 100 people, was organized for October 1 to celebrate United Nations Day of Older Persons. Following the luncheon, Senior Liberals were invited to participate in small group workshops to identify topics of interest. These topics formed the basis of subsequent events and keynote speakers. Many of the areas of concern fell within provincial jurisdiction. The group later approached the provincial government and began also to act as a conduit to channel concerns to appropriate provincial departments.

Conclusion: Unless the work of the Seniors Club leads to some change or action, participants will soon lose interest. In addressing the role that can be played by a federal government, examples such as Participaction were cited in which the federal government was able to mobilize a wide range of interest groups behind a movement to advance solutions for critical issues. Influencing Senior's movements, through our connectivity of Seniors Clubs and Commissions, could be a means to facilitate Liberal solutions and values to Senior's issues.

Why is it (a Seniors Club) important?

There are many resources in the community that offer support to meet NEEDS of seniors. Public education on how to access this information needs to be addressed. It was also noted that other special interest groups such as Women, Youth and Disabled, have Ministers of State to which concerns can be directed and solutions sought. A federal ministry has never been established for Seniors.

Conclusion:

The framework of local Seniors Liberal Clubs and its associated provincial and national Commissions is a conduit to effect policy and Party platform not readily available to other seniors groups in the community. It is important that Seniors Clubs speak for all Seniors, and not just Liberal Party Seniors. This is consistent with the National Liberal Party constitution and the vision of the Prime Minister, to abandon paid Liberal memberships in favor of identifying "movements" with like-minded people who may be registered members or supporters.

How can I contribute?

Without greater clarity of the outcomes desired from a Seniors Club, it is not possible for individuals to determine:

- a) how they might contribute, or
- b) if they even want to contribute...or
- c) if there is even a need for a Senior Liberals Club

Participants noted there exists wide-ranging audiences within the Senior population. There is a need to understand the target group(s) to identify needs, set goals and strategies to meet these goals. There is no

singular issue – nor a singular solution. Importance was attached to having Seniors Clubs address BOTH needs and interests. Reference was made to a recent survey of Seniors across the country in which Environment, Economy, and Job Skills, topped the list of what Seniors thought was important; suggesting that Seniors and, by extension Seniors Clubs, indicate that Seniors want to play a role in shaping the country they are leaving to their grandchildren.

Conclusion:

We need to become more aware of whether there exists a central registry of services available to seniors from all levels of government. There was a suggestion this might be something that may already have been done at an academic level; and if not, perhaps could be taken on by a university. Immediate access to what is already available to meet Senior's needs and education about these programs seems an important first step.

What would we achieve?

Before we can advance, we must be able to define Behavioral Outcomes of the work of a Seniors Club. Attention was drawn to the work already being done at a national level such as the rumored National Strategy for Seniors, and the establishment of a Caucus for Seniors. There is also a National Housing Strategy underway which addresses housing needs for Seniors.

Conclusion:

Doug will enquire at the provincial and regional levels about a National Seniors Strategy. We believe we cannot proceed without knowing what is contained in this strategy. Seniors Clubs are intended to be a grassroots up planning process, but with a National Seniors Strategy already in the works, we may now be taking on the role of enacting the elements of the strategy. In the absence of this information, we are setting up clubs that run the risk of being out of alignment with national vision. (ed note: are the Seniors Commissions are not part of the writing of this strategy? – and if not, why not?).

Who would participate?

Within the "Seniors population" there are distinct groups: Seniors over 80 yo have different needs from those 65-80 yo, and many people under the age of 65 also hold the interests of Seniors upper-mind, as they become caregivers to Seniors and/or try to anticipate personal future needs.

Conclusion:

There seems to be an interest in having membership open to anyone. The future bylaws for the Seniors Commission may direct otherwise, however, the possibility of having different memberships based on those 65yo and over, and those under the age of 65, seems to be the preference of those consulted.

Next Steps

Further action or discussion on the concept of the K-LC Seniors Club will be suspended until we receive the National Seniors Strategy. The next meeting will be open to anyone who wants to discuss the contents of the National Seniors Strategy. Reactions to the strategy will influence the establishment of a Seniors Club.

Participation.

I thank those of you who attended this session. Your input was greatly appreciated.

Should anyone on this distribution list wish to participate in the next steps of discussion on the National Seniors Strategy; please email me with your desire to be included on a future distribution list.

Feel free to forward this to anyone whom you think might want to be advised of future discussions.

Respectfully Submitted
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