

CONTENTS

Federal funding changes affect Aging Issues Network

A Huge Thank You to Linda Bowering!

Annual Conference Now in May

Public Meeting on Home Care

Keep it green!

A positive story about living with Age-Related Macular Degeneration.

Federal funding changes affect Aging Issues Network

Last month, the Aging Issues Network learned that the funding it has relied on for the past several years will be discontinued by the federal government. The AIN is not the only group affected: many small, grassroots organizations will see their funding end in March 2010.

The AIN is excited about the work it has started, and we think that an active voice for seniors is crucial in Newfoundland and Labrador. Starting soon, the AIN will begin looking for alternate funding sources, both large and small. If you represent a large organization, we might be contacting you for a donation. And if you know of funding sources that the AIN might be eligible for, please let us know -- all ideas are welcome!

We'll be sure to keep you posted on this important issue.

A Huge Thank You to Linda Bowering!

This month, we'll be saying farewell to one of our most dedicated and valued volunteers. Linda Bowering, who has been with the AIN since the beginning, will be leaving for Ottawa at the end of January. We're happy that Linda will be moving closer to family (especially her new grandchild!) but we'll miss her wisdom, humour, and energy. Linda has devoted countless hours to both the Seniors Resource Centre and the Aging Issues Network, and both organizations are much richer as a result of her contributions. Good luck to Linda and her family as she moves to the mainland!

Annual Conference Now in May

One small positive side effect of having our federal funding cut is that we no longer need to have the Annual Conference in March. The weather has been

terrible during past Conferences, and we're now free to pick a different date. This year's Conference will be held in May. We're currently seeking funding for this Conference, and will provide details as they arise.

Public Meeting on Home Care

The AIN attended MHA Lorraine Michael's Town Hall on Home Care on November 25th. The Town Hall was held at the Virginia Park Community Centre, and the meeting room was packed with people concerned about home care in this province. The media was there, as well as home care workers, people receiving home care, and individuals trying to secure home care for their loved ones.

People spoke about the incredibly poor working conditions that many home care workers face: not getting paid for sick days, having to pay for their own training, and not being recognized or compensated for the incredible amount of comforting and nurturing they provide.

People seeking home care talked about how hard the current home care system can be for people in the family. A woman seeking home care for a member of her own family talked about the incredible stress she has encountered in trying to get a home care worker. Other people talked about financial strain, and the emotional problems caused by not being able to find help.

The overall message that came out of the meeting was that Newfoundland and Labrador needs a better home care system. It needs more people providing care. It needs better pay and better working conditions for home care workers. Lorraine Michael made the point that Newfoundland and Labrador is now a "have" province, and that the time to put a better home care system in place is now.

Pointing to other provinces, such as Ontario, Michael said, "Now is the time to do it, and if the will is there, we *can* do it."

Keep it green!

In late November, the provincial government announced that new long-term care homes would be built in Pleasantville. In sharing the announcement, the AIN asked members if they had any comments. A surprising (or perhaps not too surprising!) number of members wrote in about the need for real green

space. That is, not just a strip of grass between the homes and the parking lot, but real park space, with trails wide enough for wheelchairs to get through and community garden plots.

The AIN fully supports seniors' desire for rich, "real" green space. A lot of research shows that interaction with nature keeps us healthy, and moving to a long-term care home should not require people to give up what might be a life-long love of gardening. So, when it comes to the new long-term care facility in Pleasantville, we're saying, "Keep it green!"

A positive story about living with Age-Related Macular Degeneration.

Thank you to the Newfoundland and Labrador Office of the CNIB for sending this in!

"CNIB saved my life," says AMD patient Josie McGruer.

Saying that CNIB 'saved her life' may seem an exaggeration, but for Josie McGruer, who's in her 70s, it's a deeply-felt truth. "When faced with vision loss, there is a tendency to accept it and do nothing," says Josie. "It can make you feel so alone and useless."

Six years ago, she was diagnosed with Age-Related Macular Degeneration [AMD], one of the world's leading causes of vision loss, but she had struggled with it for much longer. Though it is the leading cause of blindness in people over 50, AMD remains little understood, and in Canada alone, there are 75,000 new cases of AMD annually.

Josie did not associate her first symptoms with vision loss. "Sometimes when I was driving," she says, "I would see flashing lights around my eyes. I just brushed it off."

However, she really took notice when, while driving one day, a man and a boy stepped out of nowhere. "It gave me quite the scare," she says. "Then, I noticed my central vision becoming blurry; and I found it difficult to read, and I love to read."

Josie didn't know anything about AMD or poor vision, so it took a while before she consulted a doctor. "I wasn't ready to admit there was something wrong and even if there was, I hoped glasses were the answer."

When diagnosed with AMD, she admits to being scared and depressed. “The most difficult part of vision loss is admitting that you need help.

“Not being able to drive; giving up my volunteer work; and not being able to read were really beginning to affect my life, so I called CNIB because I needed to know that there were things I could still do. “A CNIB counsellor listened to my concerns; assessed my vision; took away some of my fears; and helped me understand how AMD was affecting my ability to see.

“I received a white cane and was shown how to get from place to place safely by using it to warn me of obstacles. When I first learned how to use my cane, I was absolutely thrilled because I’d been worrying that I wouldn’t be able to visit my grandchildren.

“Other areas in which CNIB helped, included: setting up my kitchen so I could prepare my own meals safely; explaining the importance of good lighting in order to better use my remaining vision; and learning different techniques to get around my home without injuring myself.

“Not being able to read was devastating and for a time I did manage by using a magnifier but my sight deteriorated further. CNIB introduced me to their library and now my books are delivered right to my mailbox.

“After living a life with good vision, it’s hard to imagine living without it,” Josie concludes. “But it doesn’t have to be that way. You can reach out and learn how to use what vision you have left. It was empowering for me. In fact, CNIB saved my life and I will always be grateful for that.”