



Strategy 338: The Montreal Branch met with the Bloc Québécois member for the federal riding of Salaberry-Suroît as part of the national strategy of defending the interests of Federal Retirees.



On 19 December 2024, Branch President Jacques Lambert, accompanied by Pierre Desmarais of the advocacy committee, had a videoconference with Ms. Claude DeBellefeuille, Bloc Québécois MP for the riding of Salaberry-Suroît. The 40-minute videoconference took place while she was driving to Ottawa. Her political assistant, Mr. Steve Hickey, responsible for communications and her agenda, also took part in this meeting.

Following formal introductions, we briefed them on the key priorities of our 170,000-member National Association, in line with our primary mission of advocating for our members' interests in retirement income security, seniors, drug insurance, Veterans and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

We informed the MP of our Association's national priorities, such as retirement income security, and our various national strategies for seniors, which include housing, home care, long-term care, and access to prescription drugs. We also noted the importance of maintaining secure and sustainable pension plans, especially when actuarial surpluses have been identified by the Treasury Board of Canada. This last point particularly intrigued her, because Ms. DeBellefeuille was not at all aware of this file.

We informed her of a Treasury Board decision published at the end of November to transfer \$1.9 billion from the pension fund to a consolidated fund, without any consultation with unions or employee or retiree representatives. We also voiced our concern about a possible additional appropriation of \$7.4 billion from the pension fund, which still remains the deferred compensation of retirees and employees. The MP indicated that she fully shares our concern.

We discussed a new report that our Association supports and appears on our national website. Published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, it is entitled *The Power of Pensions: The Impact of Pension Income on the Canadian Economy*. This report highlights the critical support that pensions provide to Canada's communities and economy. For example, the report's key findings state that in 2021, workplace pension plans paid \$84 billion in pension payments, which represented 5% of all income received by Canadians that year, more than the income from the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), the Quebec Pension Plan and employment insurance. Ms. DeBellefeuille was very impressed by the findings of this report.

On another topic, we informed MP DeBellefeuille of a public forum organized by the Edmonton Pensions Branch on the Alberta government's proposal to replace the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) with a provincial plan. When our members were asked whether Federal Retirees should actively participate in defending the CPP, 95% of respondents agreed. In fact, a majority noted that the CPP is an essential part of their retirement income and that losing any portion of it would affect their ability to pay their bills. Ms. DeBellefeuille invited us to send her relevant documentation on this issue.

We then discussed the National Seniors Strategy, part of our Association's advocacy strategy. We emphasized the fact that by 2030, adults over the age of 65 will represent 23% of Canada's population, or approximately 9.5 million people. This is the fastest growing segment of the population, with a life expectancy of 80 years. Ms. de Bellefeuille informed us that her party does not have a national strategy on this subject. However, she indicated that her party has proposed resolutions in Parliament to improve tax fairness for seniors. The Bloc Québécois tabled Bill C-319, which proposes to increase the Old Age Security pension for seniors aged 65 to 74.

We asked Ms. de Bellefeuille about caregivers. She told us that the Bloc Québécois has demonstrated a commitment to caregivers by proposing measures to support them. For example, in 2021, the Bloc Québécois suggested creating a tax credit for caregivers to recognize and alleviate their essential contribution. In addition, the party advocated for an improvement in financial support programs and respite services for caregivers. However, it is important to note that the policies and positions of political parties can evolve.

We also asked about the current status of Bill C-64. It is still under review in Parliament. It is essential to follow parliamentary deliberations to learn about recent developments and the remaining steps before possible adoption.

In conclusion, we explained that we want to establish a climate of cooperation, productive exchanges and shared information in order to maintain a productive relationship.

Jacques Lambert, President

Pierre Desmarais, Administrator and member of the Advocacy Committee