



Strategy 338: The Montreal Branch met with the Bloc Québécois member for the federal riding of Thérèse-de-Blainville, as part of the national strategy of defending the interests of Federal Retirees



On 5 December 2024, Branch President Jacques Lambert and the Administrator of Advocacy Committee Sylvie d'Alcantara, had a videoconference with Ms. Louise Chabot, MP for the riding of Thérèse-de-Blainville. Her political attaché, Mr. Nando Pastorino, also attended

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 coverage, Veterans and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

We explained our association's national priorities, such as improved retirement income security, and our various national strategies that include housing, home care, long-term care, and access to prescription drugs. We also stressed the importance of maintaining safe and sustainable pension plans, especially in a context where actuarial surpluses are identified by the Treasury Board of Canada.

We discussed the special \$250 rebate promised by the Government of Canada to workers, but not to retirees and seniors. Our national president wrote to the Prime Minister and several members of the Cabinet to express his concern with this inequity. The Bloc Québécois shares this position. It appears that the president of FADOQ, Ms. Tassé-Goodman, raised the same concern.

We discussed with MP Chabot the Treasury Board decision published at the end of November to transfer of \$1.9 billion from the pension fund to a consolidated fund without any consultation with unions, employee representatives or retirees. We also raised our concern about the possible appropriation of an additional \$7.4 billion from these funds, which still remain the deferred compensation of retirees and employees. MP Chabot indicated that she fully understands our concern.

We discussed a new report that our Association supports. Published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, it is entitled *The Power of Pensions: The Impact of Pension Income on the Canadian Economy*. We argued that 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 represents 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. Chabot was very impressed by the findings of this report.

On another topic, we informed MP Chabot 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. Chabot, as a Bloc Québécois MP, indicated that this does not concern her, as the *Régie des Rentes du Québec* was never part of the Canada Pension Plan.

We then discussed the National Seniors Strategy, which is part of our Association's advocacy strategy. We emphasized the fact that by 2030, adults over the age of 65 will make up 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. Chabot informed us that her party does not have a national strategy on this subject. However, she indicated that her party has proposed resolutions in the Canadian Parliament to improve tax fairness for seniors.

In its 2024 budget, the federal government proposed \$1.5 billion over five years to support pharmacare. The Minister of Health will establish an expert panel to make recommendations "on the operations and financing of a single-payer, national and universal pharmacare program in Canada." Ms. Chabot told us that discussions are still underway regarding the final implementation of Bill C-64. We also talked about equitable access to prescription drugs, which is not consistent across the country. Bill C-64, as it is being oriented in these discussions, indicates that the government could be the first payer for certain drugs, which could potentially impact private insurance coverage.

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
Sylvie d'Alcantara, Head of the Advocacy Committee