

To Mayor and Council:

I am a senior. I own my own home. It is an older mobile home in a MHP park in Prince George. I pay taxes, utilities and pad rent for my home. My income consists of CPP, OAS and GIS. After fixed expenses I have \$91.67 left.

These expenses include the following:

- Pad Rent
- Phone
- Internet
- Natural Gas
- BC Hydro
- Car insurance
- House insurance
- Property taxes
- Gas for car
- Prescriptions
- Chiropractor appointment
- Massage therapy
- Pre-paid funeral plan
- BCAA
- Activities at Seniors Centre

Those expenses do not cover the following:

- Food
- Clothing & Footwear
- Personal hygiene
- Cleaning supplies
- C Pap Machine hoses, masks or filters and distilled water
- Haircuts
- Gifts
- Extra costs during winter - snow removal, salt for ice removal on driveway and sidewalk
- Extra costs during summer - lawn mowing, gas for lawnmower
- Maintenance on my home - paint, repairs needed
- Maintenance for my car or any repairs needed

I have a budget. I pro rate annual bills and put that money in a savings account, so that I have it when my house insurance, car insurance, and taxes are due. I do that for BCAA as well. I have BCAA because I can't afford to have a break down with my car. My car is a 2006. I can't afford for an appliance in my house to quit on me.

I use my GST cheques to purchase things that I need. I look for sale items when I shop. I get a discount on gas because I have a BCAA membership. I have to get oil changes on my car twice a year. I will need a new set of winter tires next year. I just bought a set of summer tires last year.

I belong to a seniors recreation centre where I can pay \$2 per visit to do some activities to hopefully keep me moving. I do volunteer work to keep active. If it wasn't for that centre, I would be staying home.

I was raised during a time when you worked hard to get ahead. You saved money to be able to buy things. You looked after each other. You knew there was someone worse off than you, and you learned to be grateful for what you had. You did for yourself and your family what you could. You didn't rock the boat. You just made do with what you had. You kept quiet and carried on.

I learned to be very independent. I am a survivor. It has always been hard for me to ask for help. It has always been hard for me to identify my needs, because I was raised to believe everyone else came first and I was the caretaker.

Becoming a senior and then retiring was a difficult step. When you're young you have lots of ideas, stamina, and energy. You're able to do things. You have dreams and goals. But when you retire, it can feel like you have nothing. The income you had is gone, the job you went to everyday is gone. You feel lost and confused. You wonder where in the world you fit in. So many things to look forward to when you were younger. And then it seems like all of a sudden all of that is gone. Retirement. At first you think this is great. I don't have to get up and go to work. I can stay home, go out, do whatever I want to. But after a while that gets old and you go home because you don't know where else to go.

And if you were a workaholic, you probably don't have many friends, because you were always too busy working to get ahead. It's a whole new world out there when you retire and it can be lonely and confusing. Your body doesn't want to cooperate with you. You look in the mirror and wonder "Who are you? What are you going to do? What is there to do? How can I do it?"

I really feel that once you become a senior you should receive a package of information on what to expect when you retire. Resources in your community that can answer those questions, lists of the programs available for seniors, and contact information. That information should be easily accessible and readily available in senior centres. It should be updated and maintained as necessary. We don't have phone books anymore and a lot of seniors don't feel comfortable using a computer and modern technology.

And those of us who have computers, what happens when it becomes obsolete? It's not like I can afford to buy another computer or get a newer phone. There's no money for that sort of thing and yet almost every one expects you to be able to text or email them. You can check online. Well, you can't check online if you haven't got internet or wifi because you can't afford it and you can't just skip down to your local library and use the computers there if you have limited transportation and their schedule doesn't fit yours.

I believe that MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying) should be every one's right to decide, if they so choose, to die. I watched a friend die in a full care seniors home. My friend was an avid walker and reader until she became blind. While spending time with her in the home she was in, I saw so many residents who couldn't participate in any activities, were totally dependent on the caseworkers. Many of them seemed to be in a vegetative stage. Unaware of what was happening around them. That isn't quality of life to me. A lot of these people didn't even have family or friends visiting them. I feel that we, as a society, are more humane when it comes to pets than we are to friends and family. This isn't right. Seniors are put in homes and some are forgotten about. Out of sight, out of mind. Their families are too busy or unable to come and visit them. Again, put on a shelf to collect dust or shoved in a closet and forgotten about.

We worked hard to get here. Why do we have to keep working harder to get everything we need? We are the foundation. When we fall apart the whole building comes down! Isn't it time that we got something back? It's like us seniors have been put on the shelf to gather dust or put in the back of the closet and forgotten about. Just because we were the quiet ones who worked hard to make ends meet, does not mean we don't need anything.

I don't drink and I don't smoke, nor do I take drugs. Once in a while it might be nice to go to the theatre and see a movie. Or go to a concert or an event without worrying about how I'm going to pay for it. Or maybe go to the hairdresser and get my hair cut. We don't want a lot.

We aren't here for a long time. It would be nice to at least have a good time while we are still here. We can't do that struggling to make ends meet when they just aren't going to, no matter how tight your budget is. We've cut back far more than we ever have and we are still trying to just survive. Where is the quality of life?

We have a right to:

- Good, affordable housing,
- A family doctor,
- A good health system including physiotherapy, hearing aids and other basic needs as we age,
- Medication to be affordable,
- A good dental system including basic dental care and basic needs as we age,
- Reliable and affordable transportation,
- Healthy food to eat,
- To have more money for basic needs and then,
- Some more money so we can have some sort of quality of life,

Sincerely,

Jane Bulkley

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