

SAMPLE LETTER (2022January)

Dear **MLA**

Happy New Year! Let's hope that this year will be better than the past two.

I'm writing to you as a member of the Catholic Women's League of Canada and a member of your constituency.

Over the past two years we have seen the terrible effects of Covid-19 and its variants on seniors in our country. Too many have died due to inadequate care, not to mention the isolation they have had to endure. Separation from their loved ones has played havoc on their mental health. As we know, Covid-19 is not the only challenge our seniors face. Many are worried about their futures including MAiD (medical assistance in dying) as a proposed solution for their problems. Will their individual values and faith positions be respected? Will they receive the health care they deserve? Does Alberta intend to follow the lead of British Columbia and start to push MAiD in seniors' and palliative care facilities? MAiD is not health care. As well, many seniors have challenges with housing, ageism, finances and mental, physical and emotional abuse. They need to have at the legislative level a person who can advocate on their behalf, namely an independent seniors' advocate. They need someone to turn to when they become frustrated with their care or lack of it.

In September 2015, the Alberta/Mackenzie Provincial Council of the Catholic Women's League began an initiative to have the sitting government appoint a seniors' advocate who would be an independent officer of the legislature. This position being an officer of the Legislature and independent of the government, would have the ability to continue the work of advocacy on behalf of seniors after a change in government. In 2016 our president and members of the council met with the newly elected NDP government and presented our letters and petitions. They listened very carefully to our concerns. As a result, the then Housing and Seniors Minister, Lori Sigurdson appointed a seniors' advocate although not an independent officer. The position did not survive a change in government.

An article titled "The Case for Seniors Advocates" in the Fall 2021 issue of Sage, a publication of the National Association of Federal Retirees advocated for seniors' advocates in all provinces. In the article, they state that there is a difference between seniors' ministers and seniors' advocates. Ministers serve policy and political interests while advocates serve public interests. British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador all have seniors' advocates and, up until 2019, so did Alberta. On April 16, 2021, the Edmonton Journal carried an article entitled "Opposition calls for Seniors' Advocate". Clearly the interest is there for a seniors' advocate. The UCP abolished the Seniors' Advocate in December 2019. If the position had not been abolished our vulnerable seniors and their caregivers could have had more timely and effective help, instead of the mayhem that unfolded in seniors' care.

This is where you come in. It's time to do something really positive for Alberta. This is an issue which crosses all party interests. Appointing an Independent Seniors' Advocate is the right thing to do for the citizens of Alberta. Alberta needs to show leadership with this issue and meet the needs of its most vulnerable citizens.

Sincerely,